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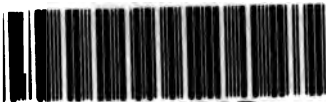
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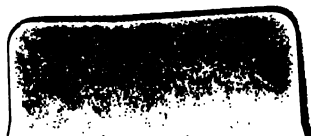
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A
PLAIN COMMENTARY
ON
The Four Holy Gospels,

INTENDED CHIEFLY
FOR DEVOTIONAL READING.

VOL. IV.—PART I.

S T. J O H N.

CHAPTERS I.—XI.

ASK FOR THE OLD PATHS, WHERE IS THE GOOD WAY, AND WALK
THEREIN; AND YE SHALL FIND REST FOR YOUR SOULS.

JEREMIAH VI. 16.

GRANT, O LORD, THAT IN READING THY WORD, I MAY NEVER
PREFER MY OWN SENTIMENTS BEFORE THOSE OF THE CHURCH
IN THE PURELY ANCIENT TIMES OF CHRISTIANITY.

Bishop Wilson.

LONDON,
JOHN HENRY PARKER.

M DCCC LV.

101. d. 258.



TO
THE MEMORY OF
JOSHUA WATSON, ESQUIRE, D.C.L.,
WHO DEVOTED HIS TIME, AND FORTUNE, AND INFLUENCE,
TO DOING GOOD IN SECRET :
This Commentary on St. John's Gospel
IS RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED,
IN GRATITUDE FOR HIS APPROBATION AND ENCOURAGEMENT,
AND FOR THE BLESSING OF HIS
FRIENDSHIP.



A

PLAIN COMMENTARY

ON

St. John's Gospel

INTENDED CHIEFLY
FOR DEVOTIONAL READING.

THOU MAKEST THY NEST AS HIGH AS THE EAGLE.

WOMANLY LOVE. WE THEREFORE TRUST IN GOD THAT THE
GREATEST BEING IN HEAVEN UPON THE EARTH, THAT, BY
BEING ILLUMINED BY THE JOYFULNESS OF THE BLESSED
ANGELS AND TRANSCENDENT SAINTS, MAY SO WARM IN
THE LOVE OF THE FATHER, THAT IT MAY AT LENGTH
ATTAIN BY THE LIGHT OF EVERLASTING LIFE: THROUGH
JESUS CHRIST OUR LORD. AMEN.

PLAIN COMMENTARY

ON THE FIRST CHAPTER OF

St. John's Gospel.

1 *The Divinity, Humanity, and office of JESUS CHRIST.* 15 *The testimony of John.* 89 *The calling of Andrew, Peter, &c.*

ST. JOHN wrote his Gospel long after the other three Evangelists; at a time, when "many deceivers" had "entered into the world, who confessed not that JESUS CHRIST had come in the flesh^a." Now, "every Spirit that confesseth not that JESUS CHRIST is come in the flesh, is not of God^b." "This," (as the beloved Disciple states repeatedly,) "is the Spirit of Antichrist^c." Accordingly, it was the object of the blessed writer to check the growing Heresy. "These [signs] written," as he declares at the end of Ch. xx., "making of his own Gospel,) "that ye might have that JESUS is the CHRIST, the SON of GOD; that believing, ye may have life through his name."

^a 1 St. John iv. 3.

^b, ver. 7.

MERCIFUL LORD, WE BESEECH THEE TO CAST THY
BRIGHT BEAMS OF LIGHT UPON THY CHURCH, THAT, IT
BEING ENLIGHTENED BY THE DOCTRINE OF THY BLESSED
APOSTLE AND EVANGELIST SAINT JOHN, MAY SO WALK IN
THE LIGHT OF THY TRUTH, THAT IT MAY AT LENGTH
ATTAIN TO THE LIGHT OF EVERLASTING LIFE; THROUGH
JESUS CHRIST OUR LORD. AMEN.

THIS IS THE GATE OF HEAVEN.

PLAIN COMMENTARY

ON THE FIRST CHAPTER OF

St. John's Gospel.

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^a 2 St. John, ver. 7.

^b 1 St. John iv. 3.

^c 1 St. John iv. 3; ii. 22: 2 St. John, ver. 7.

We are prepared, after these statements, for the very express declarations concerning the Divinity and the Humanity of CHRIST, with which the present Gospel commences.

1. In the beginning was the WORD,

“In the beginning,”—to remind us of the first words of Genesis (i. 1). See the note on St Matthew i. 1.

St. Matthew and St. Luke supply the human genealogy of CHRIST; and the former Evangelist begins his Gospel with it. But the Disciple whom JESUS loved, soars up far higher; and discourse at once of his LORD and ours, as “without descent,—having neither beginning of days, nor end of life^d:” as “*the Root*” as well as “*the offspring of David*:” the WORD, who *was* ‘in the Beginning; and ‘*was God.*’ “Who shall declare *His* generation?”

By this less usual Name also, (“the WORD”) St. John draws away our thoughts from the Human to the Divine Nature of our Redeemer. And yet it was no new designation, but one perfectly well recognized at the time.

The reason of the Name may be perceived by many considerations. It is designed to teach us that the SON was “with the FATHER,” somewhat as a word dwells in the mind. It is the utterance of the mind; and the SON is the utterance (so to speak) of the FATHER. Begotten from all Eternity

^d Hebrews vii. 3. • Revelation xxii. 16. ‘ Isaiah liii. 8.

He yet abstracted nothing from the Father ; whose very Image and Representation He yet was and is. And the name seems especially designed to preclude many of the thoughts which the mention of *Sonship* is sure to awaken,—and which cannot attach to a Being “without Body, parts, or passions.” Then, further, CHRIST was fitly called “the WORD” because He came upon Earth “to declare” the Father (i. 18): whom He revealed to every creature, somewhat as words reveal the heart and mind of man. “All things,” He said, “that I have heard of My FATHER, I have made known unto you” (xv. 15). Accordingly, it is stated in the Epistle to the Hebrews, God “hath in these last days *spoken* unto us by His Son.” (i. 2.) See more, in the note on ver. 18.

Lastly, it may be observed that a *word* becomes known, by clothing itself with a *sound*. Expressed in writing, it becomes visible also. And somewhat thus it was, that the Eternal WORD, by assuming flesh, manifested Himself to the World : and, was beheld, not only by human eyes ; but, as the Apostle remarks, was “*seen of Angels**.”

and the WORD was with GOD, and the WORD was GOD.

The SON was “*in the Beginning* :” so that there never was a time when He was not. But lest any one should suppose from this, that the WORD was

* 1 Tim. iii. 16.

Unbegotten, the Evangelist adds immediately,—“And the WORD was with GOD.” To the same effect, does the Second Person in the Blessed Trinity discourse concerning Himself, in the Book of Proverbs:—“The LORD possessed Me in the beginning of His way, before His works of old. I was set up from Everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the Earth was. When there were no depths, before the mountains were settled, while as yet He had not made the Earth.” (viii. 22—26.) So that there is one Person of the FATHER, and another Person of the SON.

This was He whom the same St. John beheld by Revelation “clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and His Name” was still “called the WORD of GOD^s.”

2 The same was in the beginning with God.

“With” Him,—yet so as to be *one* with Him: for, as it is said,—“I and My FATHER are one” (x. 30). “He that hath seen Me, hath seen the FATHER.” “I am in the FATHER, and the FATHER in Me.” (xiv. 9, 10.)

The words of the text are more precise (if possible) than those which went before. They preclude the notion that the FATHER was in any way prior, in time, to the SON.

WISDOM, that is, CHRIST, (compare 1 Corinthians i. 24), says in the Book of Proverbs,—

^s Revelation xix. 13.

"When He prepared the Heavens, I was there : when He set a compass on the face of the depth : when He established the clouds above, when He gave to the Sea His decree ; then I was by Him, as one brought up with Him : and I was daily His delight, rejoicing always before Him." (viii. 27 to 30.)

All things were made by Him ; and with-⁸out Him was not any thing made that was made.

We are carried back to the very beginning of Time,—to that period which is spoken of in Genesis i. 1, and which long preceded Genesis i. 2. What, then, is here declared concerning the birthday of Creation? Even, that when God the FATHER, "in the beginning," "created the Heaven and the Earth,"—God the SON was "with" Him : "by whom also He made the worlds^b." The Evangelist lays down this great truth first positively, and then negatively ; for it is one of those mighty verities which may admit of no doubt or question. We proclaim in the Nicene Creed,—
"By Whom all things were made,"—meaning CHRIST : and our warrant for it is the plain and repeated statement of Scripture. "There is but one God, the FATHER, *of* whom are all things and one LORD JESUS CHRIST, *by* whom are all thingsⁱ." But the most sublime passage of all,

^b Hebrews i. 2.

ⁱ 1 Corinthians viii. 6.

perhaps, is found in Colossians i. 16, 17; where it is said,—“For by Him were all things created, that are in Heaven, and that are in Earth, visible and invisible, whether they be Thrones, or Dominions, or Principalities, or Powers: all things were created by Him, and for Him: and He is before all things, and by Him all things consist.” See also Ephesians iii. 9, Hebrews xi. 3, 2 St. Peter iii. 5. Also Psalm cii. 25, compared with Hebrews i. 8, 10.

It is asked in the Book of Proverbs, concerning the Author of Creation,—“What is His Name, and what is His Son’s Name, if thou canst tell?” (xxx. 4). And, in the same Book, as here, God’s work in Creation is ascribed to the SON:—“The LORD *by WISDOM* hath founded the Earth” (iii. 19). Now Wisdom, as already explained, is one of the Names of CHRIST.

4 In Him was Life; and the Life was the Light of Men.

We still linger on the threshold of Creation. “In Him was Life.” “In Him,”—as in a Fountain! “For as the FATHER hath life in Himself; so hath He given to the SON to have Life in Himself^k.”—Moreover, the Life which was in Him, “was the Light of Man.” All the Light which our Spirits are conscious of, and whereby alone they may be said to live,—is from *Him*!

^k St. John v. 26.

And the Light shineth in Darkness ; and 5
the Darkness comprehended It not.

Our nature, since Adam's Fall, had become as it were "without form and void, and darkness was upon the face" of it. And it is said,—“the Light of men” shone athwart that darkness : but “the darkness comprehended It not.” The Evangelist is hinting at the New Creation.

Compare this repeated mention of *Light* (ver. 4, 5, 7, 8, 9), with what is said in Genesis i. 8, 4, 5 ; and take notice how the first page of the New Testament again recalls the first page of the Old.

But observe that in ver. 9, as if with a special reference to that earlier Revelation, CHRIST is called “*the true Light* :” just as He is elsewhere called “*the true Bread*,” (vi. 32), and “*the true Vine*” (xv. 1). All others, therefore, were but “*the figures of the true*”¹ ; that is, they were but types, emblems, figures, of *Him* who created them ;—who, emphatically, is *the Truth* ;—and for whose sake alone, “they are, and were created.”

There was a man sent from God, whose 6
name *was* John.

The Evangelist speaks generally of the office of St. John Baptist,—concerning whom he will speak more particularly by and by. He was “sent from God :” whence, speaking by the mouth of His

¹ Heb. ix. 24.

prophet, God says,—“Behold, *I send My Messenger^m!*”

- 7 The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all *men* through him might believe.
- 8 He was not that Light, but *was sent* to bear witness of that Light.

See note on ver. 23.

The Baptist bore witness to the glorious Luminary which had arisen on the world, by the rays which it threw upon himself. In like manner the sunlight on the mountain informs men that the Sun has risen, though they do not yet behold the Sun's orb.

- 9 *That* was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the World.

In so marked and emphatic a manner is the appellation of LIGHT bestowed upon our LORD at the outset of St. John's Gospel. That Name, He often took to Himself,—as in viii. 12: ix. 5: xii. 46: and it is full of high and holy teaching. The creature is evidently meant to instruct us concerning the Creator. Here, the mention of Light seems to carry our thoughts back to “the beginning” (see note on ver. 5). It suggests moreover that the SON came from the FATHER,—being

^m Malachi iii. 1.

"the Brightness of His glory, and the express Image of His Person",—"somewhat as Light comes from Light ("Light of Light," as it is said in the Creed). Now, it is the nature of Light so derived, to be co-existent, con-substantial, co-equal. Whence, our LORD could say, "he that seeth Me, seeth Him that sent Me," (xii. 45.)

He was in the World, and the World 10
was made by Him, and the world knew Him
not.

"The World" here denotes particularly the Gentiles; and the reference is especially to the time of the Old Dispensation. St. John reminds us that CHRIST was the Author of Creation: and bids us notice the marvellous fact that, though He was ever in the World, (which was the work of His Almighty Hands,)—upholding and sustaining it, —yet that the World did not know Him.

He came unto His own,

11

"His own,"—or "His own home," (as the same word is translated in xix. 27),—denotes the House of Israel; to which our LORD Himself declared that He was especially sent°. The World might, of course, be equally called "His own,"—since, by right of Creation, all things are equally His. Yet had the Jewish people been, from the beginning,

° Heb. i. 3.

° St. Matt. xv. 24.

God's "peculiar treasure"^p: "a special people unto Himself, above all people that are upon the face of the Earth^q." "The seed of Abraham, [His] friend^r:" "whose were the Fathers; and of whom, as concerning the flesh, CHRIST came^s." To them "pertained the Adoption;"—as it is said in Exodus iv. 22,—“Israel is My Son, even My First-born.” And again, “I will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the LORD Almighty^t.” Well therefore, when He was “made flesh,” might the Only-Begotten of the FATHER be said to have come to “*His own!*”

It is written in the Song of Moses,—“When the Most High divided to the Nations their inheritance, when He separated the sons of Adam . . . the LORD's portion [was] His people, Jacob [was] the lot of His inheritance^u.” Well therefore, when He was born in Bethlehem of Judea, might our SAVIOUR be said to have come to “*His own home!*”

and His own received Him not.

Observe what is here said. The World, “did not *know*.” “His own,” “did not *receive* Him.” The “foolish heart” of the first had been “darkened,” because “they did not like to retain God

^p Exod. xix. 5. Ps. cxxxv. 4, and see the margin of Malachi iii. 17.

^q Deut. vii. 6 and xiv. 2.

^r Isaiah xli. 8.

^s Romans ix. 5.

^t 2 Cor. vi. 18.

^u Deuteronomy xxxii. 8, 9.

in their knowledge^v." They therefore did not *know* God. But the Jews,—“to whom pertained the Adoption, and the Glory, and the Covenants, and the giving of the Law, and the service of God, and the Promises^z”—of *them* it could not be so properly said that they did not “*know*,” as that they did not “*receive*,” the SAVIOUR. The first had ignorance to plead for not *knowing* Him: for not *receiving* Him, the second were without excuse. Whence it came to pass that He proved a Light to lighten the Gentiles^y, when by repentance and faith they turned to Him: whereas, of the Jewish nation, it is at last declared that, in consequence of their hard and impenitent hearts, JESUS “did hide Himself from them^z.” “For judgment,” said our Blessed LORD, “I am come into this world, that they which see not might see; and that they which see might be made blind.” (ix. 39.)

But as many as received Him, to them ¹² gave He power to become the Sons of God,

For though the Jews, as a nation, rejected the Messiah, yet many among the people “received Him.” See, for instance, St. John ii. 23: vii. 31: viii. 30, 31: ix. 16: x. 42: xi. 45, 48: xii. 11 and 42. To these, in reward of their Faith, (as it is here said), was given the privilege of be-

^v Romans i. 28.

^z Rom. ix. 4.

^y Is. xlii. 6: xlix. 6. St. Luke ii. 32.

^z St. John xii. 38.

coming "the Sons of God;" concerning which wondrous title, see 1 St. John iii. 1, 2.—CHRIST does not compel obedience. He does but invite it.

Nor does He *make* men 'the sons of GOD:' He does but give them '*power to become*' so. Implying thereby that we, being regenerate, (in Holy Baptism), and made GOD's children by Adoption and Grace, (by the same Blessed ordinance),—need *daily to be renewed* by GOD's Holy Spirit^a.

even to them that believe on His Name :

For, as St. John in another place declares^b, "Whosoever believeth that JESUS is the CHRIST, *is born of GOD.*"

- 13 which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of Man, but of GOD.

He speaks of our Regeneration, or new Birth in CHRIST,—and contrasts it with our natural Birth. More is said of this great mystery in ch. iii. verses 3 to 8: where our SAVIOUR declares that "except a man be *born of Water and of the Spirit*, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of GOD." This explains what the Beloved Disciple only hints at in this place. See note on iii. 5.

The Only-Begotten SON of GOD, being by nature of one substance with the FATHER, for us men and for our Salvation came down from

^a Collect for Christmas-Day.

^b 1 St. John v. 1.

Heaven and was made Man. Baptized into Him, we become "members of His Body,—of His flesh and of His bones^c." We are made "partakers of the Divine Nature^d." "The SPIRIT itself beareth witness with our Spirit, that we are the children of God^e." Whence, in amazing condescension, God describes the SON as "the first-born among *many Brethren*^f:" and He Himself, (as the Apostle speaks), "is not ashamed to call [us] brethren^g."

In order that Men might be born of God, God was first born of Man. Whence, it follows—

And the WORD was made flesh,

14

That is "*Man*," as in Psalm cxlv. 21: Joel ii. 28: Galatians ii. 16. Now, Man consists of Body and Soul;—so that besides human flesh, our Saviour CHRIST had a human soul also.

It is not here said that 'He came to,'—or was 'joined with,'—but that He was '*made*' Man: for the WORD *came* to men often^h, but He was *made* man only once: and He might have been joined to man without becoming a partaker of man's Nature. But because He was made '*very man*,' language which can be applied properly to man alone, is applied to Him,—as, that He weptⁱ—

^c Eph. v. 30.

^d 2 St. Pet. i. 4.

^e Rom. viii. 16.

^f Rom. viii. 29.

^g Heb. ii. 11.

^h Jeremiah i. 2, Hosea i. 2, &c.

ⁱ St. John xi. 35, St. Luke xix. 41, and Hebrews v. 7.

hungered^k,—thirsted^l; marvelled^m—was grievedⁿ,—wearied^o,—and made angry^p. It was because He had His own body, that He was able to *bear* our sicknesses^q: because He had His own soul, that He was able to carry our sorrows^r.

Lest any should be so weak, or so wicked, as to pretend that the Word by being “*made* flesh,” parted with the Divine Nature, or underwent any change whatsoever, the Apostle proceeds,—

and dwelt among us.

“The fulness of the Godhead, bodily,” was therefore there^s.

“Dwelt among us” may seem only to imply that CHRIST made His dwelling with the sons of men: but something infinitely loftier than that is meant. “Tabernacled in us,” (for so the words in strictness should be translated), teaches that the Eternal SON, not only put on a Tabernacle of Flesh, as St. Peter and St. Paul speak; but that He took up His abode, in that common Human Nature which belongs to all our race: whence it is declared that He dwelt “*in us*.” As Hooker excellently says,—“It pleased not the WORD or WISDOM of GOD, to take to Itself some one person amongst men; for then should that one have been advanced which was assumed, and no more. But

^k St. Matthew iv. 2, and xxi. 18.

^l St. John iv. 7, and xix. 28.

^m St. Matthew viii. 10.

ⁿ St. Mark iii. 5.

^o St. John iv. 6.

^p St. Mark iii. 5.

^q St. Matthew viii. 17.

^r Isaiah liii. 4.

^s Colossians ii. 9.

WISDOM, to the end She might save many, built Her House of that Nature which is common unto all,—She made not *this or that man* Her habitation, but dwelt *in us*.” By thus becoming a partaker of our fallen Humanity, CHRIST became the Restorer of it, likewise : for from Him is thereby derived to every other son of Adam those divine graces which are inherent in Himself. And this is why He is called “the New Man,”—“the second Adam,”—and “the beginning of the Creation of God*.” This supplies the reason of that contrast—“for as in Adam all die, even so in CHRIST shall all be made alive†.” Hence, also, it is said,—“If any man be in CHRIST, he is a new creature‡.”

Observe, further, that there is an allusion here to the manner in which CHRIST anciently “dwelt” among His chosen people. His “Glory filled the Tabernacle‡;” and *that* Glory, (or “Shekinah”) was the token of His special presence*. But the Tabernacle, or Temple, (by which latter name the Tabernacle is sometimes called‡,) was a type of that Human Body, in which our SAVIOUR’s glorious Godhead was enshrined*. When, therefore, the Evangelist says that the LORD “tabernacled in us,” by employing a Greek term which closely

* Rev. iii. 14.

† 1 Corinthians xv. 22.

‡ 2 Corinthians v. 17.

‡ Exodus xl. 34; Numbers xiv. 10.

* Isaiah vi. 4, compared with 1 Kings viii. 10, 11, and Revelation xv. 8.

‡ 1 Sam. i. 9, and iii. 3.

‡ St. John ii. 19 to 21, and 1 Cor. iii. 16.

resembles the Hebrew word "Shekinah," he is evidently recalling, and reverting to, the past history of the Jewish Tabernacle and Temple; and implying the actual fulfilment of what Haggai had predicted,—namely, that "the Desire of all nations," when He came, would so fill the Temple with Glory, that "the Glory of this latter House shall be greater than of the former*." And this may help to shew the meaning of the exclamation which follows,—

(and we beheld His Glory, the Glory as of the Only-Begotten of the FATHER,) full of Grace and Truth.

Our LORD "manifested forth His Glory," to be sure, when He wrought His miracles,—as at Cana, concerning which, see St. John ii. 11; and at the raising of Lazarus, concerning which, see St. John xi. 4, 40. But the Evangelist in this place, alludes to a sight which was witnessed by only two others besides himself. He refers to the Transfiguration of our LORD;—having been one of the "eye witnesses of His Majesty," and "with Him in the Holy Mount," as St. Peter speaks. See 2 St. Peter i. 16 to 18.

- 15 John bare witness of Him, and cried, saying, This was He of whom I spake, He that cometh after me is preferred before me: for He was before me.

* Haggai ii. 7, 9.

The History does not begin yet. The Evangelist is but anticipating here the witness of the Baptist recorded in ver. 30.

He says that John "cried," because John was "the voice of one *crying* in the wilderness,"—ver. 23.

And of His Fulness have all we received, 16
and Grace for Grace.

These are the words of the Evangelist ; whereby he contrasts the supplies of grace under the Law and the Gospel respectively,—the one, almost a type or shadow of the other. "Grace for Grace,"—the New in the place of the Old.

For the Law was given by Moses, *but* 17
Grace and Truth came by JESUS CHRIST.

"Grace and Truth,"—as at the end of ver. 14. This contrast of the Law and the Gospel supplies the best comment on the conclusion of the former verse.

No man hath seen God at any time ; 18
the Only-Begotten SON, which is in the bosom of the FATHER, He hath declared *Him*.

With one more solemn saying, the Evangelist concludes his Introduction. That none ever saw God is clearly laid down in the Old Testament^a, as well as in the New^b. And yet, it is sometimes

^a Exod. xxxiii. 20. ^b St. John v. 37 : vi. 46. 1 Tim. vi. 16
1 St. John iv. 12.

recorded of men in Scripture that they “saw God face to face^e,”—“saw the God of Israel^d,”—“saw the LORD^e,”—and the like. The meaning of those marvellous and mysterious sayings, is here explained. It was the Second Person in the Blessed Trinity who thus revealed Himself. To “declare” the FATHER, had been the blessed office of the SON from the beginning. It was He, who, in the person of a created Angel, so often spoke to the Fathers in the Old Testament: as, to Abraham^f; to Jacob^g; to Moses^h; to the chiefs of Israelⁱ; to Gideon^k; to Manoah and his wife^l; to Isaiah^m, and the rest:—a prelude, as it were, to His future Incarnation.

The Historical part of St. John’s Gospel now begins.

- 19 And this is the record of John, when the
Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem
20 to ask him, Who art thou? And he confessed,
and denied not: but confessed, I am
not the CHRIST.

The attention of all the World was awakened to the probable Advent of the MESSIAH about this time. It was natural, therefore, that so remarkable a person as the Baptist should have called

^e Gen. xxxii. 30.

^d Exod. xxiv. 10.

^f Genesis xviii. 2—22.

^h Ex. iii. 2—6.

^k Judges vi. 11—24.

^m Is. vi.

^e Isaiah vi. 1.

^g xxxii. 24—30.

ⁱ Ex. xxiv. 9—11.

^l Judges xiii. 3—22.

forth the enquiry,—Art thou the CHRIST? For John's reply shews that *that* was the question now put to him.

And they asked him, What then? Art thou Elias? And he saith, I am not. Art thou that prophet? And he answered, No.

They meant,—Art thou Elijah come back to Earth in person? For in *that* sense did the Jews interpret the two concluding verses of the prophet Malachi. To this, the Baptist makes answer, "I am not." But we know that he *was* the promised Elias; for our Blessed LORD expressly says so. See St. Matt. xi. 13, 14; and xvii. 10 to 13.

"Art thou *the Prophet*?" is said with reference to that famous prediction of Moses,—"*The LORD thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto Him shall ye hearken*"^a;" whereby he foretold the MESSIAH, of whom he was himself in so many respects, a type. This second title, the Baptist of course disclaims.

Then said they unto him, Who art thou? that we may give an answer to them that sent us. What sayest thou of thyself?

He said, I *am* the Voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the LORD, as said the prophet Esaias.

^a Deut. xviii. 15, which is quoted both by St. Peter, Acts iii. 22, 23; and St. Stephen, Acts vii. 37.

Quoting Isaiah xl. 3.—John was but ‘*a Voice*!’ the voice of ‘**THE WORD**.’ So was he but ‘a burning and a shining *lamp*,’ (for *that* is the expression in St. John v. 35) : going before Him, who reveals Himself as ‘**THE LIGHT** of the World;’—a lamp kindled at the fountain of Light!

Consider how empty and vain is the mere *voice*, without the *word*: whereas, the word needs not the voice,—except to make it known to others^o! Consider also how humble is the office of the lamp; helping only to dispel the darkness, until the Day dawns^p!

24 And they which were sent were of the
25 Pharisees. And they asked him, and said unto him, Why baptizest thou then, if thou be not that **CHRIST**, nor Elias, neither that prophet?

26 John answered them, saying, I baptize with water: but there standeth One among
27 you, whom ye know not; He it is, who coming after me is preferred before me, whose shoe’s latchet I am not worthy to unloose.

John contrasts his own Baptism, which was a mere washing with water, with the Baptism of **CHRIST**, which was attended with the gift of the **SPIRIT**. He then humbly professes his own comparative littleness and unworthiness; (for to loosen the shoe or sandal, was the office of the meanest

^o 1 Sam. i. 13, &c.

^p 2 Pet. i. 19.

slave): and thus ends the first recorded testimony which he bore to CHRIST. The Evangelist proceeds to fix the scene of this transaction.

These things were done in Bethabara beyond Jordan, where John was baptizing.

And why, when so many names of places are, as it seems, industriously withheld, was the Evangelist guided to describe the present locality so particularly? It may have been for the following reason:—

Beth-abara signifies the ‘House of passage,’—a name eminently allusive to the Baptist’s office; for by him, the transition, passing, or *passage*, was made from the Law to the Gospel, from Moses to CHRIST. As the Israelites of old had to come through Jordan into the land of Canaan, so now were they being brought, by Baptism in the same waters, into the true land of Promise. There was a divine fitness, therefore, that “these things” should have been “done in Bethabara *beyond Jordan*, where John was baptizing.”

After what we are taught concerning the name of Nazareth, in St. Matthew’s Gospel, ii. 23, (where see the note), this will not perhaps be thought a fanciful Exposition of the present text.

The next day John seeth JESUS coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the World.

- 36 And looking upon JESUS as He walked, he saith, Behold the LAMB of GOD !

As St. John *twice* uses these words of CHRIST, (in ver. 29, and in this place,) so do we, in the Litany, *twice* call upon our Blessed SAVIOUR by the same appellation.

- 37 And the two disciples heard him speak, and they followed JESUS.

These were St. Andrew and St. John,—men who from the very first shewed themselves ready “to follow the LAMB whithersoever He goeth.”

- 38 Then JESUS turned; and saw them following, and saith unto them, What seek ye ?

This was not perhaps a very encouraging address,—as men speak. It may warn us against expecting too much in our first approaches to CHRIST. That all His human heart was yearning towards them, all the while,—who shall doubt ?

They said unto Him, Rabbi, (which is to say, being interpreted, Master,) where dwellest Thou ?

Their enquiry shews that they desired to be with Him: to know His dwelling, in order that they might frequent it.

^u Rev. xiv. 4.

He saith unto them, Come and see. They 39 came and saw where He dwelt, and abode with Him that day: for it was about the tenth hour.

That is, they spent with Him *the whole day*, from 10 o'clock in the morning. St. John reckons his hours in the manner of the Asiatics, among whom he wrote; and whose reckoning, strange to relate, agreed exactly with our own.

How blessed and memorable was the occasion here recorded, to the Author of the present Gospel! Well may he mark all things so accurately, —the place, and the day, and the hour of the day: the gesture of his LORD, and His gracious words. The Evangelist suppresses only the mention of himself.

If we are but in earnest in drawing near to CHRIST, He gives us ample opportunities.

One of the two which heard John *speak*, 40 and followed him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. He first findeth his own brother 41 Simon, and saith unto him, We have found the Messias, (which is, being interpreted, the CHRIST.)

“He *first* ;”—that is, Andrew found his brother Simon, before John was able to find his brother James: but be sure the Disciple of Love was not much later in bringing his brother to CHRIST.

How genuine was the zeal of these men towards God; which would not let either rest till he had conveyed the good tidings to his Brother!

- 42 And he brought him to JESUS. And when JESUS beheld him, He said, 'Thou art Simon the son of Jona: thou shalt be called Cephas, (which is by interpretation, A stone.)

Our SAVIOUR no sooner sees Simon than He bestows upon him his name of strength; foreseeing what would be hereafter. The speaker in this verse is the same who, in the Old Testament, gave new names to Abram, to Sarai, and to Jacob.

- 43 The day following JESUS would go forth into Galilee; and findeth Philip, and saith
44 unto him, Follow Me. Now Philip was of Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter.

Thus, a fifth Apostle,—a fellow townsman of Andrew and Peter,—is gathered into the fold!

It is impossible to think of these poor plain men without wonder and admiration. They had left their home, and forsaken their trade, in order to wait upon the stern Baptist, and become his disciples. Their souls were engrossed with the desire of beholding the promised MESSIAH, whose Advent they felt assured was at hand. Let it never be thought that they received 'a call,' and thereupon became earnest, self-denying, holy. They did not become great Saints because they

were called to become Apostles. They were, on the contrary, called to become Apostles because they were such great Saints.

Surely their glorious History may well teach us to look on men of the same condition of life with interest, not to say with reverence. If Bethsaida alone contained an Andrew, a Peter, and a Philip,—there may surely be dwelling unsuspected Saints at this day among ourselves!

And can it be wrong to extend this observation to the other sex; remembering that a maiden worthy to become the Mother of our Blessed REDEEMER, was found dwelling in poverty in the despised Nazareth?

Philip findeth Nathanael, and saith unto ⁴⁵ him, We have found Him, of whom Moses in the Law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of Joseph.

“Jesus of Nazareth,”—the appellation which fulfilled the prophecy noticed in St. Matthew ii. 23,—is here for the first time heard. Next, it is spoken by a devil,—see St. Luke iv. 34. It clung evermore to the Son of Man: was fastened to His cross^z: pronounced by Angels^y: claimed by Himself^z: and finally became the prevailing name by which diseases were banished^a, and in conformity with which the first Christians were called^b.

^z St. John xix. 19.

^y St. Mark xvi. 6.

^a Acts xxii. 8.

^a Acts iii. 6, and iv. 10.

^b Acts xxiv. 5.

Take notice, that Philip speaks of Him as One who had been long known to himself and his friends,—JESUS of the city of Nazareth, *the Son of Joseph*. “Have I been *so long time with you*, and yet hast thou not known Me Philip^c?”—was accordingly the question which our LORD asked him at the Last Supper.

“*We* have found :” that is, Andrew and Simon, James and John ; the first named being his own especial friend. Consider the following passages, —St. John vi. 5 and 8 : xii. 21 and 22.

- 46 And Nathanael said unto him, Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth ? Philip saith unto him, Come and see.

Nathanael, (who is called Bartholomew by the other Evangelists,) was of Cana in Galilee,—as we read in ch. xxi. 2. The holy company had, therefore, by this time reached the scene of the miracle recorded in the next chapter.

Arrived at Cana, Philip straightway hastened away in search of his friend ; (these holy men are our examples at every step of the history !) ; and his announcement, when he has found him, clearly shews how full his heart was of one great subject. It shews, too, what studious readers of Scripture they both had been. When Nathanael hesitates, Philip answers him with a saying which he had perhaps already learned from the lips of his Master, CHRIST. See ver. 39.

^c St. John xiv. 9.

JESUS saw Nathanael coming to Him, and 47
saith of him, Behold an Israelite indeed, in
whom is no guile !

Our LORD (had He chosen) could have greeted His servant with a complete solution of the difficulty he had recently expressed concerning the supposed place of CHRIST'S Nativity : but we find that He took a far diviner course. He convinced Nathanael that He knew him, by declaring to him his character : thus leading the Disciple at once to the belief that he had to do with the Searcher of hearts.

By calling Nathanael "an Israelite indeed," and by the notice of his character which follows, our LORD'S words seem to have respect to the character of Israel, (that is, Jacob,) as it is set down in Genesis xxv. 27. Now, to Jacob the discernment of Angels was especially granted : consider Genesis xxviii. 12 : xxxii. 1, 2 : also 24 to 30. This prepares us for the remarkable language of our LORD in ver. 51.

Nathanael saith unto Him, Whence know- 48
est Thou me ? JESUS answered and said unto him, Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig-tree, I saw thee.

Our SAVIOUR perceived the thought which was already springing up in His servant's heart. Nathanael suspected that surely it was Philip who

had been talking to our LORD concerning Hence the peculiarity of our LORD's reply which He convinced Nathanael that He der His knowledge from no human source.

Before the arrival of Philip, Nathanael, as il literal fulfilment of the prophetic foreshadowin of the days of the Gospel, is found to have be "sitting under his fig-tree^d." He had been alon He had thought himself unobserved also. Th words of our Blessed LORD just now quoted, con vinced him that he had been all along in the pre- sence of one and the same Being,—even of Him whose "eyes are in every place, beholding the evil and the good."

What might the occupation of Nathanael have been, as he sat beneath his fig-tree? Doubt not but what there is some very exquisite circumstance alluded to here; though we know it not, and can- not know it.

- 49 Nathanael answered and saith unto Him, Rabbi, Thou art the SON of GOD; Thou art the King of Israel.

Such was his hearty confession,—produced by the discovery that he had to do with One who searcheth the heart and the reins. By the same evidence, the Woman of Samaria became a be- liever^e; and the Apostles were fully convinced that JESUS of Nazareth "came forth from God^f."

^d Compare Micah iv. 4 and Zech. iii. 10.

^e St. John iv. 19.

^f Compare St. John xvi. 19 and 30.

1

2



HEREAFTER YE SHALL SEE HEAVEN OPEN, AND THE ANGELS OF GOD
ASCENDING AND DESCENDING UPON THE SON OF MAN.

St. John i. 51.

ON ST. JOHN'S GOSPEL.

doubt not that, evermore, Nathanael, (that is *tholomew*,) felt that he was bound to Philip a tie strong as that of blood. Not in vain, sure, is it recorded, that when our LORD sent His Apostles "by two and twos," it was *Philip and Bartholomew* who went together. Consider the following texts,—St. Matthew x. 3 : Mark iii. 18 : St. Luke vi. 14.

JESUS answered and said unto him, Be- 50
cause I said unto thee, I saw thee under the
tree, believest thou ? thou shalt see greater
things than these.

One of the "greater things" here promised, was
the miracle of the Water made Wine, which im-
mediately follows.

And He saith unto him, Verily, verily, 51
I say unto you, Hereafter ye shall see
heaven open, and the Angels of God as-
cending and descending upon the Son of
man.

Our Blessed LORD directs the divine saying
which follows to Nathanael, ("He saith unto
him ;") but addresses His prophecy to all who
are present, ("ye shall see.") Most mysterious
and deep are His words, and hard to explain ; but
they seem to mean something like this :—

You are about to see the actual fulfilment of
that which was only shewn to Jacob in a

* St. Mark vi. 7.

The Prayer.

O EVERLASTING GOD, who hast ordered
and constituted the services of
angels and men in a wonderful order; me-
grant, that as Thy holy Angels abide
in Thy service in Heaven, so by Thy as-
sistance they may succour and defend
Earth; through JESUS CHRIST our
Amen.

PLAIN COMMENTARY

ON THE SECOND CHAPTER OF

St. John's Gospel.

1 CHRIST turneth water into wine, 12 departeth into Capernaum, and to Jerusalem, 14 where He purgeth the Temple of Buyers and Sellers. 19 He foretelleth His Death and Resurrection. 23 Many believed because of His Miracles, but He would not trust Himself with them.

II. AND the third day there was a Marriage in Cana of Galilee ;

That is, the third Day after the three which the Evangelist has been describing. Thus the Gospel of St. John, like the Book of Genesis, begins with the history of a Week : the work of the sixth and last day, (on which the second Adam “manifested forth His Glory”), being the chief of all, and emphatically pronounced (see verse 10,) to be very “good.” On both occasions, the sixth day was signalized by the Marriage rite : on the former, by its Institution,—on the second, by “a Marriage in Cana of Galilee.”

Take notice, that, as the Eternal Son had instituted Holy Matrimony "in the Beginning,"—so now, at the very beginning of His Earthly Ministry, He does honour to the Marriage Rite, and blesses it anew. Surely, it was a fitting occasion for His presence, and for the act of Almighty Power which followed : for was He not Himself, mystically, the Bridegroom ; who had come into the World to take His Spouse, the Church ? — Consider the following texts : — St. Matt. xxii. 2, &c. xxv. 1, &c. St. John iii. 29. Ephes. v. 22 to 32. Rev. xix. 7 to 9 : xxi. 2.

The village is called by the same name ("Cana of Galilee,") to this day. It is described by a friend^a, who has recently visited those parts, as occupying "a gentle declivity, facing the setting sun : a sweet peaceful Village, which still arrests the traveller with its loveliness, and makes him feel that something still lingers there of *His* presence who makes all things blessed and lovely."

and the Mother of Jesus was there :

"*Was* there,"—not "was invited." It is thought that this Festivity celebrated the Marriage of one of her relations.

2 and both Jesus was called, and His Disciples, to the Marriage.

Our SAVIOUR does not annul human relation:

^a C. L. Higgins Esq. of Turvey Abbey.

ships: He does but sanctify them with His presence,—when He is invited to witness them. Least of all, can the Holy Estate of Matrimony be thought displeasing in His sight. He had already blessed Virginitv, by His Birth;—and Widowhood, by revealing Himself to Anna, in the Temple. Behold Him now making a Marriage the occasion when He first “manifested forth His glory.”

O that He were invited to *all* our Marriage-feasts! Who shall describe the blessedness of having *Him*, at all times, for a guest?

And when they wanted wine, the Mother ³ of JESUS saith unto Him, They have no wine.

The circumstance seems to have become known at once to herself,—because she was among members of her own family. Her words to her Divine Son, clearly amounted to a request that He would supply the deficiency which began to be felt; and they shew that she knew that He had the power to do the thing she wished,—if it were but His pleasure. It does not follow from this, that He had ever worked a miracle before. On the contrary. We are told that this was ‘the Beginning of Miracles.’ . . . Observe, however, that a Mother’s *request*, under ordinary circumstances, is a *command*: for this remark will help to prepare the mind for the words which follow.

Can the presence of so many additional guests,—perhaps the *unexpected* presence of the six Disciples of CHRIST,—have been the occasion of this deficiency in the supply of Wine? The thing is possible; but the conjecture would not really be worth hazarding, except for the memorable result of this day's entertainment; which made the Bridegroom's Hospitality an occasion of his enriching,—instead of his loss. Six water-pots of wine,—(one for each guest!)—became a lasting memorial of the day, when, “not forgetful to entertain strangers,” he “thereby *entertained Angels unawares* ^b.”

- 4 JESUS saith unto her, Woman, what have I to do with thee? Mine hour is not yet come.

“Woman,” was a respectful mode of address at the time, and consistent with the utmost tenderness and love. See how the same Blessed Speaker addressed the same Mother from the Cross,—St. John xix. 26 ^c.

But,—“What have I to do with thee?” is the language of rebuke. This phrase occurs in other parts of the Scripture, and always denotes that the speaker has been unseasonably spoken to, and, as it were, interfered with ^d. In this place,

^b Hebrews xiii. 2.

^c Compare St. John xx. 13, 15.

^d 2 Sam. xvi. 10: xix. 22. 1 Kings xvii. 18: 2 Kings iii. 13: 2 Chron. xxxv. 21.—St. Matthew viii. 29: St. Mark i. 24.

to be "subject unto" thee. But I am God; and it is only as thy God that I do this thing. As such,—“What have I to thee?”

The hour is not yet come,”—probably means the moment had not yet quite arrived for the act: but the sayings of Him who “spake as man spake,” are wondrous deep; and make this saying, very difficult.

Mother saith unto the Servants, What- 5
He saith unto you, do *it*.

more she gives directions to the Servants, and is comparatively at home. It is evident the Blessed Virgin understood, even from the Lord's discouraging reply, that He was about to grant her petition. Compare with this, what the Lord said to his servants concerning Joseph, a remarkable type of CHRIST:—Genesis xli. 55.

6 And there were set there six Waterpots of stone,

There is not a single word or syllable in Holy Scripture which is set down there in vain. Why, then, does St. John, who omits so many important things, inform us that the waterpots were "six" in number?

It seems likely that the number of these vessels was providentially overruled, (and was therefore recorded,) with reference to the *six* Apostles of our LORD who were present with Him on this occasion. See the note on verse 11; and consider that He was about to pour into those men, as into new vessels, the good Wine of the Gospel: from whose ample stores, the servants of CHRIST were to draw forth in turn; and present to every 'guest' at 'the Marriage-Supper of the LAMB,' severally, as much as he would. For remember,—"The Kingdom of Heaven is like unto a certain King, which made *a marriage* for His Son... And the wedding was furnished with guests*."

after the manner of the purifying of the Jews, containing two or three firkins apiece.

It was a religious custom among the Jews to wash before meals,—as we are particularly informed by St. Matthew (xv. 2.) and St. Mark (vii.

* St. Matthew ix. 17.

† Rev. xix. 9.

* St. Matthew xxii. 2 to 10.

2 to 5.) St. John's mode of alluding to their practice, in this place, reminds us that he wrote his Gospel at a distance from Judæa. He always supposes his readers unaware of the Jewish customs^g, and unacquainted with the Jewish language^h. Consider St. John v. 2.

The 'firkin' has been thought to contain about five gallons. What an overwhelming supply, therefore, of Wine was here! Surely, in the abundance thus unexpectedly produced, we have a lively image of that Royal bounty, which is wont to shower down upon us "more than either we desire or deserve!"

JESUS saith unto them, Fill the water-7
pots with water. And they filled them up
to the brim.

To all appearance a very unpromising step towards remedying the want of *Wine*: but what are appearances worth, when *GOD* is the Speaker? "Hath He said, and shall He not do it?" Surely, in all cases of doubt or difficulty, His Mother's injunction to the servants, (in ver. 5) is the counsel which the Church addresses to ourselves,—the only course which is sure to lead to Peace at the last! Obedience ever inherits a Blessing.

And He saith unto them, Draw out now, 8

^g See St. John ii. 13: iv. 9: vi. 4: xi. 55. Consider also vi. 1.

^h See St. John i. 38, 41, 42: ix. 7: xx. 16.

and bear unto the Governor of the Feast.
And they bare it.

It was the business of the Governor, or Ruler of the Feast, to provide for the entertainment of the guests, and to taste first what was set before them. Hence our LORD's injunction.

- 9 When the Ruler of the Feast had tasted the water that was made wine, and knew not whence it was : (but the servants which drew the water knew ;) the Governor of the
10 Feast called the Bridegroom, and saith unto him, Every man at the beginning doth set forth good wine ; and when men have well drunk, then that which is worse : *but* thou hast kept the good wine until now.

"*Good* wine,"—for it came immediately from Him, whose works when they first left His Almighty hands, were pronounced *good*. The effects of the miracles of CHRIST are better than the productions of Nature.

When the Ruler of the Feast spoke these words to the Bridegroom, he stated a sad truth,—of far wider application than at first sight appears. Men seek to shew their *best* at *first*,—whether of property, or sentiment, or feature. They fall away on trial. In each respect they set forth "then, that which is worse." It is not so with Him "whose ways are not Man's ways."

CHRIST always keeps the best things till the end. They who "sow in tears, reap in joy¹." In life "evil things,"—after death, eternal comfort^k. "Heaviness may endure for a night, but Joy cometh in the Morning^l."

This beginning of Miracles did JESUS in 11 Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth His Glory;

Unspeakably deep and mysterious, surely, must the teaching of our LORD's first miracle be. Do we not trace therein, symbolically, the purpose with which He came into the World,—namely, to convert the weak and watery ordinances of the Law, into the "new wine" of the Gospel, which "makes glad the heart of man" for ever? Compare St. Matthew ix. 17. Not, observe, to create a new thing: but to convert the old into something better.

For our LORD did not now create something *new*,—as when, 'in the beginning,' He 'made the Heaven and the Earth^m.' Neither did He increase and multiply a thing already existing; as when He fed the four and the five thousand. But He changed a thing which already existed, into a better thing of corresponding bulk. Just as, during the Great Six Days, He had "formed Man—*of the dust of the groundⁿ*."

¹ Psalm cxxvi. 5.

^k St. Luke xvi. 25.

^l Psalm xxx. 5.

^m Gen. i. 1.

ⁿ Gen. ii. 7: Compare i. 11, 20, 24, &c.

"Now," (as the greatest Father of the Western Church has remarked,) "if He had ordered the Water to be poured out; and had then introduced the Wine, as a new Creation, He would seem to have rejected the Old Testament. But converting, as He did, the Water into Wine, He shewed us that the Old Testament was from Himself: for it was *by His order* that the waterpots were filled." (See ver. 7.) Aye, filled to the very brim.

And so it is, that when the mind is suffered to dwell attentively on a Miracle like this, fresh points of analogy, and meanings, at first unsuspected, suggest themselves. Thus one is led to observe that, in Scripture, *Water* and *Wine*, alike are connected with the mention of spiritual gifts°. Moreover, it is obvious to remark that on this occasion, the use of *Water* was but *preparatory* to the Feast; whereas the *Wine* was an essential part of the Feast itself: and this seems to symbolize, in no obscure way, the relation in which the Law stood to the Gospel. See St. Luke v. 37 to 39.

Surely, at "the Marriage of the LAMB," the great features of *this* marriage Feast will be restored! It will then be confessed, on all hands, that the same Almighty Benefactor hath kept "the good wine until *now*;" for things which "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive,"

° Isaiah xii. 3,—compare St. John vii. 37, 38, 39. Isaiah xxxv. 6, 7: xliv. 3.—Joel ii. 28, 29,—compare Acts ii. 13, 15, 17, 18, &c. Ephes. v. 18, &c.

hath He prepared for those who love Him. "Thou hast kept the good wine until now." Surely *that* is the cry of Saints in bliss!

Verily, the Author of the Miracle which we have been considering, hath not "left Himself without witness*," even to the Heathen world. For do but consider how, year by year, the same miracle is performed, and under our very eyes; although, by reason of its frequency and regularity, we give no heed to it! What is it less than a miracle that the Rain, falling upon our vineyards, should be "made Wine?"

And fail not, Reader, to remark, in conclusion, the severe simplicity of the preceding narrative. Not a word is said of the dismay which the failure of the wine occasioned,—nor of the pleasure which attended so unexpected a supply:—nothing, of the surprise of the Servants,—nor of the satisfaction of the guests:—nothing, of the effect which this miracle produced on the Giver of the Feast;—nor of how it came, at last, to his knowledge. Neither is our attention called to the largeness of the miraculous supply which made him henceforth rich. We are left to study the details, and draw the inferences, and feed upon the teaching, of every part of the miracle, for ourselves. . . . Let it be freely allowed, at least, that the number of particulars withheld, serves to impart interest and dignity, a hundredfold, to every word which is

* Acts xiv. 17.

actually set down. Nothing can be in vain, where so little is recorded : nothing can be trivial, which comes from the Mouth of God.

and His Disciples believed on Him.

Those who delight in such inquiries, may like to pursue the hint given in these few words of the progress of the Gospel, by examining the following references :—St. John ii. 23 : iv. 39, 41, 42 : vii. 31 and viii. 30, 31 : ix. 16 : x. 42 : xi. 45, 48 : xii. 11 and 42.

- 12 After this He went down to Capernaum, He, and His Mother, and His Brethren, and His Disciples : and they continued there not many days.

We have just witnessed one great Miracle. In the verses which follow we are about to be presented with another. Between the two, comes this mention of the '*Mother*' and '*Brethren*.' It is the manner of the Evangelists thus to blend the Divine and Human, in describing the actions of our LORD. See the first note on St. Matthew viii. 10, and on St. Luke viii. 23. Also the note on St. Mark ii. 5, and on St. Luke iv. 30.

Concerning the "Brethren" of our LORD, see the note on St. Matthew xiii. 55. Capernaum, where this holy company now came to sojourn, and where our SAVIOUR lived so much, was a town situated at the North-Western extremity of the Sea of

Galilee. No traces of it are to be seen at the present day,—according to the memorable prophecy contained in St. Matthew xi. 23. See the note on that place.

And the Jews' Passover was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem,

“The *Jews'* Passover,”—(as in xi. 55,) because St. John wrote at a distance from the Holy Land; and addressed his Gospel to persons who were only slightly, if at all, acquainted with Jewish customs. See the first note on the second part of ver. 6.

This, then, was the first of Four Passover seasons which are distinctly marked in the Gospels. Our LORD went up to Jerusalem on the occasion, in conformity with the requirements of the Law. See the references in the note on St. Luke ii. 41.

and found in the Temple those that sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the changers of money sitting :

The sheep and oxen were kept for the purpose of sacrifice. The doves were the offerings of those who came to be purified^p; especially of the poorer sort of people^q. The changers of money found their account in supplying those strangers and foreigners who came up, in great numbers^r, to worship at Jerusalem on these occasions, and

^p Levit. xv. 14, 29.

^q See Levit. xii. 6, 8: and compare the note on Luke ii. 24.

^r See Acts ii. 5: also 8 to 11.

brought with them the money of other countries, in order to purchase victims for sacrifice; according to the express direction of the Law*. The payment of "tribute,"—that is, the tax of a half-shekel which all contributed towards the support of the Temple,—must have also supplied these "changers of money" with occupation.

- 5 And when He had made a scourge of small cords, He drove them all out of the Temple, and the sheep, and the oxen; and poured out the changers' money, and overthrew the tables;

The "scourge of small cords" was not the *instrument*, so much as the *emblem* of His wrath. It is manifest that such a Weapon must have been powerless in other hands; certainly, it would have been ineffectual to produce the mighty results here noticed. But CHRIST wrought a miracle on the present occasion: not, on lifeless matter,—as at Cana; but on the hearts and minds of His rational creatures. Armed with that scourge, men beheld in Him a type of the Vengeance which will at last overtake the wicked. The traffickers in the Temple, panic-stricken, fled before the awful presence of Him, in whom they nevertheless had not eyes to discern their future Judge. And surely the spectacle is one which it will do men good to seek to realize to themselves. We love

* Deut. xiv. 24 to 26.

we speak of our SAVIOUR as 'meek and lowly'; and we do well,—for such an One He was. But, on this occasion, He revealed Himself in a very different character: terrible in His wrath,—and, as we were, consumed by His zeal for the honour of His FATHER'S House.

In truth, what we here behold is the fulfilment of that famous prophecy of Malachi:—"The LORD, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to His Temple; even the Messenger of the Covenant, whom ye delight in. Behold, He shall come, saith the LORD of Hosts. But who may abide the Day of His coming? and who shall stand when He appeareth? for He is like a refiner's fire, and like fullers' soap: and He shall sit as a Refiner and Purifier of silver." These words had a partial accomplishment, doubtless, at the Presentation in the Temple: their fullest accomplishment, (as they refer to the *first* Advent of CHRIST,) when, at the close of His Ministry, He purged the Temple for the second time^v: but they were strikingly fulfilled now. See the note on the last half of St. Luke ii. 38.

Deeply emblematic, we may be sure, was this act of our Blessed LORD. Besides its prophetic fulfilment, and its prophetic teaching, it set forth one great purpose of His coming;—which was, to annul the system of carnal ordinances, and to bring to light the sublime truths which lay con-

^t St. Matthew xi. 29.

^v St. Luke ii. 22 to 38.

^u Malachi iii. 1, 2, 3.

^w St. Matthew xxi. 12, 13.

cealed beneath them. When He drove the victims from the Temple, He shewed that a better Victim had at last appeared; and that the Legal Sacrifices were no longer to have any place.

And will it be said that it is merely an ingenious use of the text to find in it an individual application also? "What? Know ye not that your Body is the Temple of the HOLY GHOST, which is in you?" "Know ye not that ye are the Temple of God, and that the SPIRIT of God dwelleth in you?"

16 and said unto them that sold doves, Take these things hence; make not My FATHER'S House an house of merchandise.

"My FATHER'S House:"—the Blessed Speaker had spoken of the Temple by the same name about eighteen years before; (see the note on St. Luke ii. 49:) thereby, in express words, claiming to be the SON of GOD. See the end of the note on St. John v. 17.

On two occasions,—once at the commencement of His Ministry; next, at its close,—our SAVIOUR thus drove the buyers and sellers out of the Temple. The first incident is related by St. John only: for the second, see St. Matthew xxi. 12, 13: St. Mark xi. 15 to 18: St. Luke xix. 45, 46.

Surely, *they* still make His FATHER'S House

* 1 Cor. vi. 19.

† 1 Cor. iii. 16. Compare 2 Cor. vi. 16. Ephes. ii. 21, 22. Hebrews iii. 6. 1 St. Peter ii. 5.

"a House of Merchandize," who carry thither anxieties about their secular concerns; and allow thoughts about Trade,—hopes and fears about the Market,—to find place in the Sanctuary of God!

And His Disciples remembered that it 17
was written, The zeal of Thine House hath
eaten Me up.

Psalm lxi. contains many prophecies concerning CHRIST which the Apostles have noticed and applied. Verse 9 is quoted,—partly by St. John,—partly by St. Paul^a. Verse 21, by St. John (xix. 29.) Verse 25, by St. Peter^a.

It was *long after*, that they "remembered:" certainly not till He was risen from the dead. See ver. 22; and compare the statement in St. John xii. 16. It may be presumed, indeed, that it was not until the Ascension of CHRIST that they understood these things; until after the out-pouring on His Disciples of *that* SPIRIT, of whom it was prophesied that 'He should teach them all things, and bring all things to their remembrance, whatsoever CHRIST had said unto them^b.' After *that* great event, it may be thought that the application of Ps. lxi. 9 to this act of MESSIAH, together with the real meaning of many more of our LORD's wondrous sayings, presented itself to His Apostles.

It is to be observed, however, that He "opened

^a Rom. xv. 3.

^a Acts i. 20.

^b St. John xiv. 26.

their understanding, that they might understand the Scriptures^c," previous to His Ascension into Heaven.

- 18 Then answered the Jews and said unto Him, What sign shewest Thou unto us, seeing that Thou doest these things?

It was their wont always to make such a demand. God had accordingly furnished Moses with more signs than one^d. The Prophets, in like manner, were all furnished with some visible proof of their mission. It will be remembered that Zacharias asked for a sign; see St. Luke i. 18 to 20, and the notes there: and we find the Jewish people, on several other occasions, demanding a sign of our LORD. See St. Matthew xii. 38, and the note there; also xvi. 1. St. Luke xi. 16. See also St. John vi. 30: and consider 1 Cor. i. 22.

- 19 JESUS answered and said unto them, Destroy this Temple, and in three days I will raise it up.

A Divine answer, truly! He gives them the most wondrous sign imaginable,—a sign which was to become the very foundation of the Christian Faith. Sublimely allusive it also was, and was intended to be, to the mystical connexion between the "House" for which He had displayed such zeal, and that "House of clay^e" in which

^c St. Luke xxiv. 45.

^d Exodus iv. 1 to 9.

^e Job iv. 19.

His own Divinity was enshrined, as in a Tabernacle. Compare 2 Cor. v. 1, 4, and 2 Pet. i. 13, 14. Lastly, it contained a declaration of His own GODHEAD: for He professes that *He will raise Himself* from Death.

It will be remembered, that this wondrous prophecy of His own Death and Resurrection supplied the enemies of MESSIAH with a ground of accusation, and subject of mockery, against Him, in the end. See St. Matthew xxvi. 61,—where it will be seen that a garbled version of it was found on the lips of the two false witnesses: and St. Matt. xxvii. 40,—where the blasphemy of the bystanders, at the Crucifixion, is recorded. “There seems a particular reason therefore why St. John should introduce the cluster of circumstances, here described: for the other Evangelists had recorded the charge made against Him at His Death, without mentioning the occasion on which our LORD delivered it.”

Then said the Jews, Forty and six years 20
was this Temple in building, and wilt Thou
rear it up in three days?

They spoke of that material shrine,—the second Temple, as Zorobabel's structure is called,—which had been restored, in a style of extreme magnificence, by King Herod the Great.

But He spake of the Temple of His Body. 21

"The Temple of His Body!" . . How marvellously do remote, and apparently diverse places of Holy Scripture harmonize with those words,—bring out their meaning,—and, in turn, receive illustration from them! . . . Thus, we are reminded that the present Evangelist, in his first chapter, (verse 14), intimated that, in the fleshly Tabernacle of a human Body, *that* GODHEAD had come to reside, of which the 'Shekinah,' or Glory, in the Temple, was but a type. See the last note on the first half of St. John i. 14. The Veil of the Temple, (which "was rent in twain from the top to the bottom^f," when JESUS CHRIST expired upon the Cross,) was, we are expressly told, emblematic of His *flesh*^g,—in the same hour cruelly torn: and observe, that as GOD was said to *dwell* in the Temple, so, in our SAVIOUR's Body "*dwellleth* all the fulness of the GODHEAD bodily^h." We have just read how men, with their merchandize, defiled the Temple of GOD; and witnessed how GOD treated them: which reminds us of what is said of bodily defilement, in 1 Cor. iii. 17.

The Temple of old, and our Churches, at this day, have one extremity pointing to the East,—the other to the West. And even so point the *Temples of our Bodies*, when they are laid in the dust.

Many are the intimations in Holy Scripture that the Human Body is occupied by the Soul, as a House is occupied by its Tenant. Thus Job, as we have seen, describes Men, as "them that dwell

^f St Matthew xxvii. 51. ^g Hebrews x. 20. ^h Coloss. ii. 9.

*in houses of clay*¹:" and GOD is said in the beginning to have "*builde*d" a Woman^k. But St. Paul calls the Body, "our Earthly Tent-House," or "Tabernacle-Residence,"—for *that* is the real meaning of 2 Corinthians v. 1: intimating thereby, (in the words of an excellent living Writer,) "that the Body is a temporary structure, easily taken down, and liable to removal at very short notice. And indeed," (he adds,) "the order of removing the Tabernacle in the Wilderness from place to place, 'when the Camp set forward,' (as prescribed in Numbers iv.) supplies a very striking emblem of the awful process of dissolution, as it takes effect upon the natural Body of Man."

As "one with CHRIST^l,"—"in whom all the Building fitly framed together groweth unto an Holy Temple in the LORD,"—we are further declared to be, spiritually, "the Temple of the Living God:" even "an Habitation of God, through the Spirit^m."

When therefore He was risen from the dead, His Disciples remembered that He had said this unto them; and they believed the Scripture, and the word which JESUS had said.

See above, the note on ver. 17. The beloved Disciple here notes another of the sayings of his

¹ Job iv. 19.

^k See the margin of Genesis ii. 22.

^l See the Exhortation in the Communion Service.

^m Eph. ii. 21, 22: and 2 Cor. vi. 16.

LORD, the meaning of which only became plain long after, to those who heard it spoken. It was, in fact, the *fulfilment* of it,—“when He was risen from the dead,”—which made it plain. “And indeed, it is evident,” (says a pious Writer,) “from the subsequent mention of it by the false Witnesses, that it had been remembered in Jerusalem, and brought forth into prominent record when most needed. Thus, though it appeared no answer at the time, yet, the bread cast upon the waters was gathered after many days; and the seed sown bore a hundred-fold: nor did His Word return unto Him void.”

St. John tells us, besides, how the Faith of the first Believers, both in the Scripture, and in JESUS CHRIST, was confirmed thereby. And the Reader should take note that “the Scripture,” (that is, the Old Testament,)—together with “the Word which JESUS had said,”—made up the sum of the Faith of the first Believers; for, as yet, the Books of the New Testament were not written.

- 23 Now when He was in Jerusalem at the Passover, in the Feast *day*, many believed in His Name, when they saw the Miracles which He did.

But what miracles were these? *One* only is recorded, in verse 15. It may be that a whole world of wonders is wrapped up in this short verse of Scripture: wonders, which are alluded to by Ni-

codemus, in chap. iii. 2; and which obtain further notice in chap. iv. 45.

But JESUS did not commit Himself unto 24 them, because He knew all *men*, and needed 25 not that any should testify of Man: for He knew what was in Man.

To know the thoughts and intents of the heart, —to look into the mind of Man, and see what is passing there,—is in the power of God, and God only. In the words of an Eastern Father, “*He knows what is in the heart, because it was He who fashioned it. He needs no witness to inform Him concerning the mind, because it was His own divine contrivance.*” In like manner, the great Father of the West has remarked, that “*the Maker knew better what was in His own work, than the work knew what was in itself:*” and he quotes our LORD’s prophecy to St. Peter^a, in proof of his observation.

Consider the following texts of Scripture:—
1 Samuel xvi. 7: 1 Chron. xxviii. 9: 2 Chron. vi. 30: Psalm vii. 9: cxxxix. 1, 2: Jer. xvii. 9, 10: St. Matthew ix. 4, (with which compare St. Mark ii. 8): xii. 25: St. Luke vi. 8: St. John vi. 64: Acts i. 24: Rev. ii. 23.

^a Compare St. Luke xxii. 33 and 34.

The Prayer.

ALMIGHTY God, unto whom all
be open, all desires known, an
whom no secrets are hid; clear
thoughts of our hearts by the ins
of Thy HOLY SPIRIT, that we may p
love Thee, and worthily magnify Th
Name; through CHRIST our LORD.

PLAIN COMMENTARY

ON THE THIRD CHAPTER OF

St. John's Gospel.

1 CHRIST teacheth Nicodemus the necessity of Regeneration. 14 Of Faith in His Death. 16 The great love of GOD towards the World. 18 Condemnation for unbelief. 23 The Baptism, Witness, and Doctrine of John concerning CHRIST.

III. THERE was a man of the Pharisees, 1 named Nicodemus, a Ruler of the Jews. 2 The same came to JESUS by night,

THE name thus introduced to our notice, is one of those which are peculiar to the Gospel of St. John. Nicodemus was a member of the High Court of Sanhedrin; and, like St. Paul, belonged to "the most straitest sect" of "the Jews' religion^a." The Evangelist elsewhere relates that, in a subsequent period, many other members of the same Court believed in our LORD: "but because of the Pharisees they did not confess Him, lest they should be put out of the Synagogue^b." Such a timid believer, as yet, seems to have been Nicodemus.

^a Acts xxvi. 5.

^b St. John xii. 42.

Very beautiful is the progressive history of Faith, as it is revealed in the course of St. John's narrative: for he who now comes to JESUS under cover of the Darkness, (doubtless in order to escape notice,) is the same who, subsequently, found openly pleading with the other Rulers on our LORD's behalf. "Nicodemus saith unto thee (*he that came to JESUS by night,*" as St. John is careful to remind us,) "being one of them, Do our Law judge any man, before it hear him, and know what he doeth?" Whereupon the Pharisees are found to "chide with Nicodemus for taking His part^d." Waxing bolder in the end when Joseph of Arimathea, (another member of the same Court,) had begged the Body of JESUS, "there came also Nicodemus, (*which at the first came to JESUS by night,*) and brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about an hundred pound weight, and they two buried Him. Thus, he who was first only a timid Disciple, soon ripened into a bold Confessor; and the same who at first believed only in secret, in the end came forth openly to assist at the Burial of the LORD'S Life.

Nicodemus, then, came privately to our LORD—(being at Jerusalem, on the occasion of the first Passover; as was related in the foregoing chapter:)—

^c St. John vii. 51.

^d See the heading of St. John vii.

^e St. John ii. 13 and 23.

and said unto Him, Rabbi, we know that Thou art a Teacher come from God : for no man can do these miracles that Thou doest, except God be with him.

Observe how this man reasoned. He had beheld the miracles of CHRIST,—that unrecorded cluster of miracles (as it would seem,) which is alluded to in the 23rd verse of the former chapter^f; (and concerning which it is expressly stated, that “*many believed in His Name* when they saw the miracles which He did :”) and thence He had inferred, at once, the Divine Mission of Him by whose Hands those works were wrought. He reasoned rightly. “I have greater Witness than that of John,” said our SAVIOUR : “for *the Works* which the FATHER hath given Me to finish, the same works that I do, *bear witness of Me*, that the FATHER hath sent Me^g.”

Overcome, therefore, by the force of the evidence thus presented to him, Nicodemus comes to JESUS by night ; clearly, with a view to learning more of the mysteries of His Religion. But it is discovered that this learned Doctor has not discerned the MESSIAH,—the promised Redeemer of Israel,—in the meek and lowly JESUS ; (which He *might* have discerned, as our LORD’S words shew ;

^f See also St. John iv. 45 ; and the note on St. John ii. 23.

^g St. John v. 36 : where see the note. Consider also the following places : St. Luke vii. 20 to 22 : St. John x. 25, 38 : xiv. 11 : xv. 24.

[illegible]

answered and said unto him, Verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot enter the Kingdom of God.

ON ST. JOHN'S GOSPEL.

e had said,—“Thou art not yet born at is, by a spiritual begetting: and hy knowledge of Me is not spiritual, and human. But I say unto thee, r thou, nor any one, except he be born on, shall be able to see the glory which Me; but shall be out of the Kingdom: he begetting by Baptism which en- e mind.”

ems to have been the force and bearing ls, as they were addressed to the heart us, personally. As containing a great of Divine Doctrine, what do they con- an's need of Spiritual Regeneration, or , in order to the eternal safety of his r LORD proceeds, in verse 5, to explain ; and it is found that He speaks of *tism*,—“as generally necessary to Sal- In the meantime, the answer of Nico- ves that he had as yet no conception of meaning.

mus saith unto Him, How can a 4 oru when he is old? can he enter d time into his Mother's womb,

sa?

above the carnal sense of words understood carnally; and speaks (says one of the Fathers,) spiritual things to reason-

which so many others *did* discern, as the Gospel narrative declares :) but only a mighty Prophet of the LORD; one come “forth from God as a Teacher.” This seems clear from the language he employed, in addressing our SAVIOUR. Yet was it an evidence of great candour and goodness on his part, that he should have thus speedily broken through the bondage of the system in which he had been brought up, and of which he was himself an eminent Professor. “He that doeth Truth, *cometh to the Light*,”—as we shall presently hear our SAVIOUR Himself declare^a; and this is what Nicodemus now did. He came to the Light, in order to have the darkness of his soul dispelled.

Our LORD, in reply, says nothing expressly to magnify Himself: but proceeds gently to correct the low views of His Disciple. Availing Himself of the readiness implied by Nicodemus to receive instruction from His lips, “He begins, in the Discourse which follows, to impart some great and fundamental truths concerning that ‘Kingdom of God’ which Nicodemus, in common with the rest of his countrymen, was expecting to see established by the MESSIAH: thus leading him to entertain juster notions of its nature and end.”

- 3 JESUS answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God.

^a See below, verses 20, 21.

As if He had said,—“Thou art not yet born gain; that is, by a spiritual begetting: and therefore thy knowledge of Me is not spiritual, but carnal and human. But I say unto thee, that neither thou, nor any one, except he be born gain of God, shall be able to see the glory which is around Me; but shall be out of the Kingdom: for it is the begetting by Baptism which enlightens the mind.”

Such seems to have been the force and bearing of the words, as they were addressed to the heart of Nicodemus, personally. As containing a great disclosure of Divine Doctrine, what do they convey but man's need of Spiritual Regeneration, or New-Birth, in order to the eternal safety of his soul? Our LORD proceeds, in verse 5, to explain His words; and it is found that He speaks of *Holy Baptism*,—“as generally necessary to Salvation.” In the meantime, the answer of Nicodemus proves that he had as yet no conception of our LORD's meaning.

Nicodemus saith unto Him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his Mother's womb, and be born?

He soars not above the carnal sense of words which *cannot* be understood carnally; and speaks like a child. “Observe,” (says one of the Fathers,) ‘when a man trusts spiritual things to reason-

ings of his own, how ridiculously he talks"!—"But do thou so understand the birth of the SPIRIT, as Nicodemus did the birth of the flesh;" (remarks another :) "for as the entrance into the womb cannot be repeated, so neither can Baptism."—Our LORD proceeds to reveal more clearly the manner of our spiritual birth :

- 5 JESUS answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of Water and of the SPIRIT, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God.

As if He said,—“Thou understandest Me to speak of a carnal birth ; but a man must be born of Water and of the SPIRIT, if he is to enter into the Kingdom of God. If, to obtain the temporal inheritance of his human Father, a man must be born of the womb of his Mother ; to obtain the eternal inheritance of his Heavenly FATHER, he must be born of the womb of the Church. And since man consists of two parts, Body and Soul, the mode even of this latter birth is twofold : Water in the visible part, cleansing the body ; the SPIRIT, by His invisible co-operation, changing the invisible soul.”—Consider the truly Catholic statements on this subject contained in our Church Catechism. It will be remembered that the Church of England, in her Baptismal Service, expressly grounds the necessity of Baptism on the present declaration of our LORD.

“Except a man be born of Water and of the SPIRIT, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of GOD.” Famous words! which it has been the endeavour of misguided men, in every age of the Church, to set aside or explain away. Opposing themselves to Externals in Religion, generally, and to the two Sacraments of the Church, in particular, sectarians have sought to fasten a strange sense on these plain words of CHRIST; contending eagerly, indeed, for the bestowal of GOD’S gift (the Spirit;) while they have striven to make it appear that the duty required on Man’s side, (the Water,) can be a matter of no real importance. But,—“I hold it for a most inalienable rule in expositions of sacred Scripture,” says our wise Hooker,) “that where a literal construction will stand, the farthest from the letter is commonly the worst.” And he adds, that,—“Of all the ancients, *there is not one to be named*, that ever did otherwise expound or allege this place than as implying external Baptism.” The result of the most searching inquiry has but served to establish the truth of this remarkable statement.

Very abundantly also is it proved by the whole tenour of Scripture, that as the SPIRIT is *the necessary inward cause*, so is Water *the necessary outward means* to our Regeneration. Thus, we are taught that with water God doth cleanse and purify His Church¹. Baptism is termed by the

¹ Ephesians v. 26.

“will Himself deprive them of Regeneration and inward Grace, only because Necessity depriveth them of outward Sacraments.” In such case, it is to be thought that the secret desire and purpose which others have in their behalf, will be imputed to *them*; and accepted as such by God, all-merciful to as many as are not in themselves able to desire Baptism Consider, in connexion with this subject, the case of the Paralytic borne of four,—and that of the Impotent man at the pool of Bethesda; which will be found respectively discussed in the notes on St. Mark ii. 3, and St. John v. 7.

But it is time that we notice how the Discourse proceeded. Nicodemus is wholly unable to comprehend the meaning of the Divine Speaker: our LORD therefore helps him by suggesting the analogy of our carnal birth :

- 6 That which is born of the flesh is flesh : and that which is born of the SPIRIT is spirit.

That is to say, The Nature which a man derives from his Parents, by virtue of his natural Birth, is corrupt, fleshly, and human : *that* which he derives from God, by virtue of his New Birth, is incorrupt, spiritual, and divine.

- 7 Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again.

Words which reveal that CHRIST spake with one who was lost in *wonder* at the Discourse he heard.

The expression should be compared with St. John v. 28, 29, where the note may also be read. The appeal is made in both cases to something sensible, in order to assist the understanding. Here, the Author of Creation, having already dwelt on the wonder of our natural Birth, notices the mysterious rushing of the Wind:—

The Wind bloweth where it listeth, and ⁸ thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the SPIRIT.

That is,—Something similar is observed to take place in the case of every regenerate person. It becomes manifest to all that he is acting in obedience to a new principle; but *the Law* of the SPIRIT's operation,—whence it comes, or whither it goes,—how, or why, or for what length of time it will continue to affect a man,—there is none that knoweth.

The illustration may not, of course, be unduly pressed: but the Wind,—which is unseen, yet may be both heard, and felt: which obeys a Law indeed, yet depends for its motions entirely upon the Counsel of God's Will;—the mysterious operation of *the Wind* supplies our LORD with an image, the fitness of which to express spiritual influence, all can feel. In some languages, (in Greek for example,) one word stands for both *Wind* and

Spirit. Consider also how the descent of the HOLY GHOST, on the Day of Pentecost, was manifested by “a sound from Heaven as of a *rustling mighty Wind*.” . . . Nicodemus, for all reply, confesses his utter perplexity:—

- 9 Nicodemus answered and said unto Him,
How can these things be?

But his very perplexity takes the shape of a curious doubt. He claims *to understand* what He is required *to believe*; and still asks a carnal question: “*How* can these things be?”—as before he asked “*How* can a man be born again?”

- 10 JESUS answered and said unto him, Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things?

Rather,—“Art thou *The Teacher of Israel*?”—Such high and sounding titles were frequently bestowed on the Jewish Doctors. St. Paul seems to hint at several of those titles in the iind. chapter of his epistle to the Romans: “Behold, thou art called a Jew,” (he says,) . . . “and art confident that thou thyself art ‘A Guide of the blind,’ ‘A Light of them which are in Darkness,’ ‘An Instructor of the foolish,’ ‘A Teacher of Babes’”. On the supposition that Nicodemus enjoyed the lofty title of ‘The Teacher of Israel,’ “nothing is more probable,” (remarks a learned Indian Bishop,)

• Acts ii. 2.

• Romans ii. 17, 19, 20.

'than that our SAVIOUR should have taken occasion to reprove the folly of those who had conferred he appellation, and the vanity of him who had accepted it; and no occasion could have been more opportune than the present when Nicodemus betrayed his ignorance on a very important subject. Our SAVIOUR's readiness to condemn the practice here referred to, may be proved from St. Matthew xiii. 7."

"No one," (observes the great Father of the African Church,) "is born of the SPIRIT except he is made humble; for this very humility it is, which makes us to be born of the SPIRIT. Nicodemus, however, was inflated with his eminence as Master, and thought himself of importance, because he was a Doctor of the Jews. Our LORD casts down his pride in order that he may be born of the SPIRIT."

"Art thou then *The Teacher of Israel*," (the words may perhaps be paraphrased;) "and rememberest thou not, that, in the days of Noah, both he and all his House, were saved by water? he like figure whereunto is the Baptism of which speak. Knowest thou not that all thy Fathers were baptized unto Moses in the Cloud and in the Sea? Or hast thou not read of Naaman, the Syrian, who washed in the Jordan, and was delivered from his leprosy, (the well-known type of us;) so that 'his flesh came again like unto the flesh of a little child, and he was clean?'"...

† 1 St. Peter iii. 20, 21. § 1 Cor. x. 2. * 2 Kings v. 14.

Once more does our LORD condescend to his infirmity ; making use of a common argument to render what He has said credible :—

- 11 Verily, verily, I say unto thee, We speak that we do know, and testify that We have seen ; and ye receive not Our witness.

“Sight,” (says an Eastern Bishop,) “we consider the most certain of all our senses” ; so that, when we say we saw such a thing with our eyes, we seem to compel men to believe us. CHRIST, in like manner, speaking after the usage of men, does not indeed mean that He has seen with the *bodily* eye the mysteries which He reveals ;” (for He speaks as God, and ‘God is a Spirit :’) “but it is clear that He intends to describe Himself as possessing the most certain absolute knowledge.” The Reader is here requested to verify the following references,—St. John viii. 26, 28, 38, 40 : xv. 15 ; and to read the whole of the note on St. John v. 20. He will also observe the striking parallel between the present place and verse 32, lower down ; where the note may be consulted. The Baptist is there heard declaring the self-same things concerning CHRIST, as CHRIST here declares concerning Himself.

It is *ye*, (observe,) and *you* : not *thou* and *thee*. So also in the next verse, our SAVIOUR addresses not Nicodemus, but the Jewish nation at large, in the person of this their learned Doctor ; and pro-

* See 1 St. John i. 1 to 3.

phies that they will reject His testimony. Yet was He "the faithful and true witness"! Moreover, He had the testimony, not of *one*, but of *two*;—as we find plainly asserted in St. John viii. 16 to 18: and *that* is perhaps the reason why the same Blessed Speaker here uses the plural number: '*we speak*,' and '*our witness*.'"

If I have told you earthly things, and ye ¹² believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things?

"*Earthly things*,"—because it is here on earth that the mysteries spoken of are transacted.

"*Heavenly things*,"—seems to be said with reference to the higher mysteries of the Kingdom: eternal Truths which, to the very last, as it may be humbly thought, remained unuttered; for, on the Eve of His Crucifixion, our LORD could say, "I have yet many things to say unto you; but ye cannot bear them now^x." Observe, however, that in the case of the "earthly" and of the "heavenly things," alike, the appeal is made not to Reason, but to *Faith*; whence our LORD does not say "*understand not*," but "*believe not*."

And no man hath ascended up to Heaven, ¹³ but He that came down from Heaven, *even* the Son of Man which is in Heaven.

¹ Revel. i. 5; iii. 14.

² Compare St. Mark iv. 30.

^x St. John xvi. 12.

A little attention will suffice to establish the connexion of these words with what goes before. Our LORD is here conveying the assurance that from Himself alone could the knowledge of "heavenly things" be obtained; inasmuch as He alone had "ascended up to Heaven." His witness was worthy of all acceptation; and His only: because He spoke and testified of what He had known and seen; and, beside Himself, no man had ascended up to Heaven to see those "heavenly things" and to know them. "What He hath seen and heard" (says the Baptist in verse 32,) "*that* He testifieth."—We have yet to set forth the meaning of this difficult place of Scripture.

The first part seems to be explained by our LORD's declaration,—"*I came forth from the FATHER, and am come into the World:*" for *then* it was that the Eternal SON "came down from Heaven;" namely, when "He took Man's nature in the womb of the Blessed Virgin, of her substance*." The "*Son of Man,*" before He was conceived in the Virgin's Womb, was not in Heaven; but, after His conception, *by virtue of the union of the Divine Substance*, He was in Heaven: (as He said, "the Son of Man which *is in Heaven;*" naming Himself "wholly from His Humanity, as elsewhere He names Himself wholly from His Divinity.") For, from the hour of His Incarnation, "two whole and perfect Natures, that is to say, the Godhead and Manhood,

* St. John xvi. 28.

* Article II.

were joined together in One Person, never to be divided, whereof is One CHRIST." Speaking after the manner of men, therefore, our SAVIOUR discoursed of Himself to Nicodemus as *having ascended* into Heaven; because whatsoever is first on Earth, and then in Heaven, must be said to have ascended into Heaven.

"Although He was made the Son of Man upon earth," (writes an ancient Father,) "yet His Divinity,—with which, remaining in Heaven, He descended to earth,—He hath declared not to disagree with the title of Son of Man; as He hath thought His Flesh worthy the name of Son of God. For through the unity of Person, by which both substances are One CHRIST, He walked upon earth, being SON of GOD; and remained in Heaven, being SON of Man."—There is, in fact, an interchange of notions when we apply the names *GOD* and *Man* to our SAVIOUR CHRIST; so that for truth of speech it matters not "whether we say that the SON of GOD hath created the World, and the SON of MAN by His Death hath saved it,—or else that the SON of MAN did create, and the SON of GOD did die to save the World. Howbeit, as oft as we attribute to GOD what the Manhood of CHRIST claimeth, or to MAN what His Deity hath a right unto, we understand by the name of GOD and the name of MAN neither the one nor the other nature, but *the whole person of CHRIST*, in whom both natures are. When the Apostle saith of the Jews that they crucified the

LORD of Glory^a, and when the Son of Man being on earth affirmeth that the Son of Man was in Heaven at the same instant^b, there is in these two speeches that mutual circulation before mentioned. In the one, there is attributed to GOD, or the LORD of Glory, Death,—whereof Divine Nature is not capable; in the other, ubiquity to man, which Human Nature admitteth not. Therefore, by ‘the LORD of Glory,’ we must needs understand *the whole person of CHRIST*, who being LORD of Glory was indeed crucified, but not in that nature for which He is termed the LORD of Glory. In like manner,” (says Hooker, with reference to the present place,) “*the whole person of CHRIST* must necessarily be meant; who being Man upon Earth, filleth Heaven with His glorious presence, but not according to that nature for which the title of Man is given Him.”

One of the ancients briefly sums up the matter as follows:—“So then, He *came down* from Heaven, because He became the Son of Man; and He was *in* Heaven, because *THE WORD*, which was ‘made flesh,’ had not ceased to be *THE WORD*.”

“Having made mention to Nicodemus of the gift of Baptism,” (remarks a third writer,) “He proceeds to the source of it, namely, *The Cross*.” “thus unexpectedly introducing this Teacher of the Mosaic Law to the spiritual sense of that Law, by a passage from the Old Testament History, which

^a 1 Cor. ii. 8.

^b St. John iii. 13.

was intended to be a figure of His Passion, and of Man's Salvation :"—

And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the 14 Wilderness,

— "and it came to pass that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass he lived^c" :—

even so must the Son of Man be lifted up : that whosoever believeth in Him should not 15 perish, but have eternal life.

For when the fiery serpents bit the Israelites, and "much people died," Moses, by the command of God, "made a serpent of brass, and put it upon a pole." With what result to those who beheld it, has been already stated^d. This then was a manifest type not only of *the manner*, but also of *the benefit* of CHRIST's Death ; as CHRIST Himself here declares to Nicodemus. Moreover, the Faith of "those who truly turn to Him" was aptly shewn in the condition required of as many as were bitten of serpents, and had thus come under "the power of the Enemy^e."

To be "lifted up" was the common phrase by which Crucifixion was expressed. Our LORD employed it on two subsequent occasions. "When ye have *lifted up* the Son of Man," (He said to the Jews,) "then shall ye know that I am He^f."

^c Numbers xxi. 9.

^e Consider St. Luke x. 19.

^d Numbers xxi. 6 to 9.

^f St. John viii. 28.

So again, at the very close of His Ministry, only a day or two before He suffered: "And I, if I be *lifted up from the Earth*, will draw all men unto Me. This He said" (declares the Evangelist,) "signifying *what Death He should die*.*" And indeed, it is evident that the people understood the words in that sense, from the reply they immediately made: "We have heard out of the Law that CHRIST abideth for ever; and how sayest Thou, The Son of Man must *be lifted up*?"

"Observe," (says an Eastern Bishop,) "He alludes to the Passion obscurely, in consideration to His hearer: but the fruits of the Passion He unfolds plainly,"—namely, "whosoever believeth in Him, shall have Eternal Life."

Hear, therefore, what comfortable words our SAVIOUR CHRIST saith unto all that truly turn *to Him*:—

- 16 For God so loved the World, that He gave His Only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting Life.

It is here declared that the Only-Begotten Son was given to death. As, before, that which belongs to God was attributed to Man; so now, what belongs to Man, is assigned to God. Thus largely has the great mystery of Man's Redemption been already opened to Nicodemus! Our

* St. John xii. 32, 33.

LORD moreover here enlightens him as to a great Truth unsuspected by Nicodemus and by the Jewish nation at large; namely, that MESSIAH was to be the Saviour not of that nation only, but of the whole World. "God so loved *the World* that He gave His Only-Begotten SON." "And He is the propitiation for our sins; and not for our's only, but also *for the sins of the whole World*^h."

"God commendeth His love towards us," saith St. Paul, "in that, while we were yet sinners, CHRIST died for us^l:" in that "He . . . spared not His own SON, but delivered Him up for us all^k." "In this" saith St. John again, "was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent His Only-Begotten SON into the World, that we might live through Him. Herein is love; not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His SON to be the propitiation for our sins^l."

The Old Testament promised only length of days: but the Gospel promises "Everlasting Life."

For God sent not His SON into the World ¹⁷ to condemn the World; but that the World through Him might be saved.

For God desireth not the death of a sinner, but rather that he should turn from his wickedness, and live^m. He is called the SAVIOUR of the World,

^h 1 St. John ii. 2.

^l Romans v. 8.

^k Romans viii. 32.

^l 1 St. John iv. 9, 10.

^m Ezekiel xxxiii. 11; xviii. 23, 31, 32.

for He *wills* the Salvation of all men. If men perish, it is because they oppose *their* wills to His.

- 18 He that believeth on Him is not condemned :

On the contrary,—he “hath everlasting Life, and shall not come into condemnation ; but is passed from Death unto Life.” So it is written in St. John v. 24,—where see the note.

but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the Name of the Only-Begotten SON of GOD.

He is “*condemned*,” because (as St. John Baptist declares in verse 36,) “he that believeth not the SON shall not see Life ; but the wrath of GOD abideth on him.” And he is “condemned *already* ;” for although Judgment hath not appeared, yet is it already given. The LORD knoweth who are His : *who* are awaiting the crown, and *who* the fire.

- 19 And this is the condemnation, that Light is come into the World, and men loved Darkness rather than Light, because their deeds were evil.

“The condemnation” spoken of in the preceding verse consisted in *this* ; that when CHRIST the true Light came into the world, men rejected Him and His Doctrine : proving by their actions

that they loved Darkness rather than Light, Evil rather than Good; inasmuch as they made free choice of the one and rejected the other.

The reason is added,—“Because their deeds were evil.” And this statement exactly falls in with what we are so often elsewhere assured of; namely, that the discernment of Truth is a moral, not an intellectual act.

For every one that doeth evil hateth the 20 Light, neither cometh to the Light, lest his deeds should be reprov'd. But he that 21 doeth Truth cometh to the Light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God.

In the language of the SPIRIT, ‘Truth’ is another name for *Righteousness*: hence, ‘Truth’ is found directly opposed to ‘Unrighteousness’ in Psalm li. 5, 6: John vii. 18: Rom. ii. 8^a: 1 Cor. xiii. 6. This is surely a most instructive circumstance; for whereas *Righteousness* is a *moral* attribute,—we are apt to regard *Truth* as a purely *intellectual* matter. And yet Holy Scripture reminds us of our mistake in countless places; as was remarked in the preceding note. See some observations on this subject in the note on St. John vii. 17. The frequent recurrence of the words “True” and “Truth” in the present Gospel is very remarkable.

^a See also Romans i. 18; and consider Rev. xxi. 25; xxii. 15.

With marvellous frequency do we find our LORD discoursed of in Holy Scripture under the image of *Light*. He loved to apply to Himself this Title; and to discourse of Himself and of His Heavenly doctrine in terms derived from this, the first-born of all His creatures,—“the beginning of the Creation of God^o.”

Every one who is resolved to sin, (He says,) who delights in Sin, hateth the Light which detects his Sin.

And thus ended this memorable discourse of our SAVIOUR. Is it not possible that there was something personal, as it were, in its concluding sentences: or, at least, that the season when it was spoken,—the time of *Darkness*^p,—may have suggested the prevailing image with which it is brought to a close?

22 After these things came JESUS and His Disciples into the land of Judæa ;

That is to say, the blessed Company withdrew from the City of Jerusalem, (whither our LORD had been to keep the Passover^q, and where the preceding Discourse with Nicodemus had taken place;) and went to dwell somewhere on the banks of the Jordan. For, as it follows,—

and there He tarried with them, and baptized.

^o Rev. iii. 14.

^p See above verse 2; and the note there.

^q St. John ii. 23.

Not that He baptized any *Himself*. Of this we are particularly assured in the beginning of the next chapter,—where it is said, “Though Jesus baptized not, but His Disciples.”

And John also was baptizing in *Ænon* near to Salim, because there was much water there: and they came, and were baptized.

The Evangelist describes a locality in the north of the Holy Land,—our SAVIOUR living at this time in the south of it, and therefore at a distance of many miles from the scene of the Baptist's ministrations. All Samaria lay between CHRIST and His Forerunner. Salim is thought to have been the place called Shalim in 1 Samuel ix. 4. *Ænon* and Salim will have been in Galilee, a little to the south of Bethshan, and west of the Jordan. In this neighbourhood, on account of the abundance of water, the Baptist had fixed himself:

For John was not yet cast into prison. 24

With this passing allusion, the beloved Disciple omits the imprisonment of the Forerunner, concerning which the other Evangelists have discoursed to us so largely*. John Baptist was not cast into the dungeon of Machærus,—where,

St. John iv. 2.

See St. Matth. xiv. 3 to 12: St. Mark vi. 17 to 29: St. Luke 19 and 20.

at the end of two years, he was murdered^t,—but he was on the *very eve* of that event. The discourse, therefore, which begins at ver. 27, and extends to the end of the present chapter,—being the lengthiest of his recorded discourses,—may be regarded as the latest public witness which John was permitted to bear to MESSIAH.

25 Then there arose a question between *some*
of John's Disciples and the Jews about puri-
26 fying. And they came unto John, and said
unto him, Rabbi, He that was with thee be-
yond Jordan, to whom thou barest witness,
behold, the Same baptizeth, and all *men*
come to Him.

They refer to the transaction recorded in St. John i. 19 and 32; which "took place at Bethanara, beyond Jordan, where John was baptizing."

It is clearly implied that the "question," or rather the *dispute*, arose on the part of the Disciples of John; and may very well have turned upon the efficacy of the Baptisms respectively administered by the Baptist, and by our LORD. They come to their Master, as if with the language of complaint; revealing by their words how wholly unconscious they are of the surpassing majesty of CHRIST. "He who was with thee," (and, it seems to be implied, "who received Bap-

^t See the notes on St. Matt. xiv. 6 to 11, and St. Mark vi. 21 to 28.

tism at Thy hands;")—"the same baptizeth." The expression "All men come to Him," is the language of Disciples jealous for their Master's Honour and Reputation. Thereby is implied, what in the first verse of the ensuing chapter is expressly stated,—namely, that "JESUS made and baptized *more Disciples than John.*"

The design of John's reply is to remove the jealousy of his ardent followers; and to conduct them to the knowledge of the Truth.

John answered and said, A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from Heaven. 27

Which may either be the Baptist's vindication of our SAVIOUR's conduct; or a humble admission of his own inferiority, and dependence on God. It is perhaps rather, as if he had said,—I am a mere man, and cannot assume anything more than has been freely bestowed upon me from on High.—The very argument by which his ardent followers thought to have overthrown the MESSIAH, he proceeds to turn against them:—

Ye yourselves bear me witness, that I said, I am not the CHRIST, but that I am sent before Him. 28

Alluding to the saying recorded of him in St. John i. 20, 30, 31: which doubtless must have contained a special reference to Malachi's pro-

phcey,—“ I will *send* My Messenger, and he shall prepare the way *before Me*.” Now, as many as are so sent, are servants. The Baptist however proceeds to declare the relation in which he stood to CHRIST by a different resemblance: as it follows,—

29 He that hath the Bride is the Bridegroom :

CHRIST is that ‘Bridegroom;’ and His Spouse or ‘Bride’ is The Church. To *Him* the Bride belongeth.—The language of the SPIRIT is very constant in this respect. “Thy Maker is thine Husband: the LORD of Hosts is His Name,” says the prophet Isaiah^{*}: and again, “As the Bridegroom rejoiceth over the Bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee[†].” Again, “I was *an Husband unto them*, saith the LORD[‡].” This thought supplies the imagery of the xlvth. Psalm, and of ‘the Song of Songs, which is Solomon’s.’ It furnishes St. Paul with illustration and argument when he discourses of the duties of the married state[§]. Lastly, the Marriage of the LAMB, is told of in the Book of Revelation; where the Holy City, New Jerusalem, (that is, the Church of the Redeemed,) is seen coming down from God out of Heaven,

^{*} Malachi iii. 1. [†] Isaiah liv. 5. [‡] Isaiah lxii. 5.

[§] Jerem. xxxi. 32. Compare iii. 14, 20. Also Hos. ii. 19, 20.

[¶] Ephesians v. 23 to 32. Compare also 2 Cor. xi. 2. And see Rom. vii. 1 to 4.

prepared as "a Bride adorned for her Husband^b:" hence it is styled "the Bride, the LAMB's Wife^c." -CHRIST, then, is the chief person; for it is "*He* at hath the Bride:"—

but the friend of the Bridegroom, which standeth and heareth Him, rejoiceth greatly because of the Bridegroom's voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled.

As if he said,—*That* joy, therefore, has been mine; for I have heard the voice of CHRIST. I, the friend of the Bridegroom, have heard the Bridegroom's voice.—How must the Disciples of John have thrilled with wonder and admiration when, a year or two after, they heard our SAVIOUR claim to Himself the very title which the Forerunner here bestows upon Him! See St. Mark 19, and the notes thereon.

The expression "which *standeth*," (says an ancient Father,) "is not without meaning; but indicates that the part of John is now over, and that for the future he must stand and listen" . . . That the expression is not without meaning, either here, or in chapter i. 35, (the place to which the Baptist's words seem to have reference,) may well be suspected; but *what* its meaning precisely is, is doubtful^d.

Certain however it is that in this place the

^b Rev. xxi. 2: xix. 7.

^c Rev. xxi. 9.

^d Compare St. John vii. 37.

Baptist, (calling himself 'the friend of the Bridegroom,') describes the joy which filled his heart when he first heard the blessed sound of the SAVIOUR'S Voice. Very brief indeed appears to have been the intercourse of MESSIAH and His Forerunner. One only sentence is our SAVIOUR known to have addressed to the Baptist,—or even to have uttered within his hearing! See St. Matthew iii. 15, and the last words of the note there.

But our SAVIOUR was now about to begin His Ministry: John Baptist therefore is ready to withdraw from the scene,—“as the Morning-Star is willingly drowned in the brightness of the rising Sun.” It follows,—

30 He must increase, but I *must* decrease.

My reputation must grow less and less; my followers must fall away; the very Disciples whom I have baptized will have to be rebaptized by Him^e. But *His* Name must spread, and His Disciples increase: His Faith must extend into all Lands, till all the World doth acknowledge Him, and Earth as well as Heaven becomes full of the majesty of His Glory . . . Such is the scope of these words of the Forerunner: “a prophet, yea, I say unto you, and more than a prophet^f!”

31 He that cometh from above is above all: he that is of the earth is earthly, and speak-

^e Acts xix. 1 to 5.

^f St. Matthew xi. 9.

eth of the earth : He that cometh from Heaven is above all.

Rather, "Is above all [things] ;" which is only another way of expressing the ordinary Name of God,—‘the MOST HIGH :’ as He is called in Acts vii. 48, and as He is described in Psalm xcvi. 9. St. John Baptist therefore in this place asserts the Divinity of CHRIST. "He that cometh from above,"—he says ; or, (as our LORD expressed it in verse 13,) "He that came down from Heaven,"—is God. The Forerunner is contrasting himself, earthly in his parentage, and earthly in all his thoughts, with MESSIAH, the LORD from Heaven, whose way he came to prepare . . . Still speaking of Him, he continues,—

And what He hath seen and heard, that ³² He testifieth ; and no man receiveth His testimony.

"We speak that we do know, and testify that We have seen ; and ye receive not Our Witness ;" said our LORD in verse 11, where see the note. "As our senses are our surest channels of knowledge," observes an ancient writer, "and teachers are most depended on who have apprehended by ‘sight’ or ‘hearing’ what they teach, John adds this argument in favour of CHRIST, that, ‘what He hath *heard* and *seen*, that He testifieth :’ meaning that everything “which He said is true.” The parallel between verses 31, 32, (the words of

the Baptist,) and verses 11 and 13, (the words of CHRIST,) is very remarkable.

The Disciples of John had said,—“All men come to Him^g.” Their Master here replies,—“And yet no man receiveth His testimony !”

- 33 He that hath received His testimony hath set to his seal that God is true.

The Baptist declares that whosoever hath received CHRIST's Testimony, hath set his seal to God's Truth : just as “he that believeth not God” is elsewhere declared to have made CHRIST “a liar ; because he believeth not the testimony that God gave of His SON^h.” The words which follow are to be taken in close connexion with what precedes :—

- 34 For he whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God :

Which supplies the reason of what goes before. For *CHRIST*, whom God hath sent, speaketh the very words of *GOD*. How remarkable are these statements of the Baptist concerning *CHRIST*, when compared with the similar statements made by *CHRIST* concerning Himself ! For example,—“I have not spoken of Myself ; but the *FATHER* which sent Me, He gave Me a Commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak Whatsoever I speak therefore, even as the *FATHER*

^g Verse 26.

^h 1 St. John v. 10.

said unto Me, so I speakⁱ." "I speak to the World those things which I have heard of Him^k." —For the correct understanding of which sayings, and the many similar ones contained in the Gospel, the mysterious relation of the First and Second Person in the Blessed Trinity, as set forth in the Creeds of the Church, is to be faithfully borne in mind. Some remarks will be found on this subject in the notes on St. John v. 20; to which the Reader is referred.

for God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto *Him*.

As unto *men* He giveth; "dividing to every man severally as He will^l." On the contrary: "in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily^m."

The FATHER loveth the SON, and hath 35 given all things into His hand.

And so our LORD declares of Himself; saying, "all things are delivered unto Me of My FATHERⁿ." And the present Evangelist remarks concerning Him, that He knew "that the FATHER had given all things into His hands^o."

He speaks of the union of Deity with Manhood. "Because 'the FATHER loveth the SON' as man, He hath, by uniting Deity with Manhood, 'given

ⁱ St. John xii. 49, 50. ^k St. John viii. 26. ^l 1 Cor. xii. 11.

^m Coloss. ii. 9. See also i. 19.

ⁿ St. Mark xi. 27.

^o St. John xiii. 3.

unto me that Wisdom which cometh from above, and which Thou hast promised to give unto those who ask it of Thee. Grant me to understand Thy Words, which are from Heaven; and to loose my hold of earthly things; and to follow Thee! Do Thou forget those things that are past; blot them out of Thy Book, and wash them out of my heart, that I may be able to see Thee who art the true Light: to see Thee and to love Thee, in such sort that I may see and love nothing else, except what I behold and love in Thee!"

The Prayer.

O ALMIGHTY GOD, whom truly to know is everlasting life; grant us perfectly to know Thy SON JESUS CHRIST to be the Way, the Truth, and the Life; that, following the steps of Thy holy Apostles, Saint Philip and Saint James, we may stedfastly walk in the way that leadeth to eternal Life; through the same Thy SON JESUS CHRIST our LORD. Amen.

PLAIN COMMENTARY

ON THE FOURTH CHAPTER OF

St. John's Gospel.

1 CHRIST talketh with a Woman of Samaria, and revealeth Himself unto her. 27 His Disciples marvel. 31 He declareth to them His zeal to GOD's Glory. 39 Many Samaritans believe on Him. 43 He departeth into Galilee, and healeth the Ruler's son that lay sick at Capernaum.

THE former chapter ended with the record of the last public witness which the Forerunner was permitted to bear to his LORD,—the longest of his recorded discourses. The Baptist had since been cast into prison, and the Ministry of CHRIST was now about to begin. It had begun, in a manner, half a year before; namely, immediately after His Baptism: but the Imprisonment of John is clearly noticed as the event from which our SAVIOUR'S public Ministry dated its more special commencement. A journey into Galilee was then undertaken,—which all the four Evangelists concur in recording,—and the immediate occasion of which, the Evangelist St. John subjoins. The present Chapter

▪ St. Matth. iv. 12: St. Mark i. 14: St. Luke iv. 14: St. John iv. 3 and 43.

contains a relation of the great incident which rendered that journey for ever memorable.

It might well have been suspected beforehand that the events of a journey undertaken at such a time must have been replete with interest and wonder: but nothing so exquisite as the fulfilment of history, (so to speak,) which St. John here records, could have been imagined by unassisted reason. For we shall discover that our REDEEMER at the close of His first day's travel, arrived at that very spot of ground where Abraham had made his first resting-place on entering the Land of Canaan. Our SAVIOUR CHRIST, as faithful Abraham had done before Him, 'passed through the land *unto the place of Sichem*^b;' and lo, as Abraham had there been blessed with the vision of JEHOVAH, and the promise—'*Unto thy seed* will I give this land;' so did MESSIAH, (having taken 'on Him *the seed of Abraham*^c;) at once, and at this very spot, enter on His promised spiritual inheritance! The people of Sichem, (here written 'Sychar,') were the first to enter the Heavenly Canaan. They became the first-fruits of the spiritual Harvest of the Land. And thus much for the present incident, as it was a fulfilment of ancient Prophecy.

Standing in the very fore-front of the Sacred Narrative, it seems to have been further designed to inform us that the Samaritans were included,—included, as the remoter heathen nations were not,—in the circle to which the Gospel message

^b Gen. xii. 6.

^c Heb. ii. 16 and St. Matth. i. 1.

in the first instance extended; while yet their preparation and previous character were essentially different from that which belonged to the legitimate family of Abraham^d.

It becomes necessary now to enter on the particular consideration of the narrative before us; but the train of thought thus opened will be found pursued lower down, in the notes on ver. 42.

IV. WHEN therefore the LORD knew how the Pharisees had heard that JESUS made and baptized more disciples than John, (though JESUS Himself baptized not, but His disciples,) He left Judæa, and departed again into Galilee.

The first of the four Passovers which mark the duration of our Blessed LORD's Ministry, was now past^e. Our SAVIOUR had not returned at once into Galilee; but had withdrawn with His Disciples from Jerusalem to the banks of the Jordan, where He made a brief sojourn and baptized^f, and where He was now residing. From a comparison of the Gospels, it is found that John Baptist, who in the last chapter, "was not yet cast into prison^g," now *was* a prisoner. At this juncture, our SAVIOUR withdraws from Judæa, and returns into Galilee^h; and it is here hinted that the immediate cause of His withdrawal was

^d Dr. W. H. Mill.

^e St. John ii. 23.

^f See St. John iii. 22.

^g St. John iii. 24.

^h The references are given above in note (a.)

the jealousy of the Pharisees,—occasioned by the number of Disciples which He made.

But why did a message, conveyed to the Pharisees at Jerusalem, to the effect that “JESUS is making and baptizing more Disciples than John¹,” lead to the SAVIOUR’S withdrawal from Judæa into Galilee? Were the Pharisees inclined to become John’s Disciples? or were they even jealous for the Baptist’s honour? Not so. But from chapter i verses 19 and 24, it is found that they had long since satisfied themselves that *John* was not ‘the CHRIST.’ Fully alive to the general expectation which then prevailed, of MESSIAH’S near Advent; and aroused by the tidings of one who ‘was baptizing,’ and making many disciples, ‘in Bethabara beyond Jordan;’ they had sent a deputation from Jerusalem, formally to inquire whether John were the CHRIST or not; and to ascertain his exact pretensions^k. “When therefore the LORD knew that the Pharisees had heard” that He was drawing to Himself *more Disciples even than John*,—that ‘*all men*,’ in short, were ‘coming to Him,’ and that He was baptizing them^l,—(which last circumstance however was not strictly true, as the Evangelist is careful to note,)—it became a measure of prudence to withdraw from their observation into the remoter region of Galilee: whereby, our Great Pattern is found to have submitted Himself to

¹ Such is the exact translation of ver. 1.

^k See St. John i. 19 to 28.

^l Verses 1 and 2 should be compared with verses 22 and 26 of the former chapter.

the precept which He delivered to His Apostles, concerning flight from Persecution^m.

It is obvious to remark in passing that a hint here supplied of the probable reason why our SAVIOUR so frequently imposed silence on the subjects of His Mercy,—forbidding them to make Him knownⁿ. Especially does that command of His, delivered both to Apostles^o and Evil Spirits, that they should not tell 'that He was the CHRIST^p,' derive illustration from our LORD's conduct at this juncture. To attract towards Him the notice of the chief professors of Religion among the Jews, would probably have been the most effectual way of defeating the gracious purpose of His Ministry. *He* knew when, and how, and to whom, to reveal Himself^q. Other men, not so.

And He must needs go through Samaria. 4

Because that country occupies the centre of the Holy Land, separating Judæa from Galilee.

Then cometh He to a city of Samaria, 5 which is called Sychar, near to the parcel of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph.

Alluding to the act of the dying Patriarch, recorded in Genesis xlviii. 22. Sychar is the city

^m St. Matth. x. 23,—where see the note.

ⁿ See the note on St. Mark i. 44; also the last note on St. Mark i.

^o St. Matth. xvi. 20.

^p St. Mark i. 34 and iii. 12: St. Luke iv. 41.

^q Consider St. John iv. 25, 26: ix. 35 to 37, &c. &c.

called (by anticipation) 'Sichem', and 'Shechem' in the Old Testament^a; after 'Shechem the son of Hamor the Hivite'. In the Acts^a, the name is written 'Sychem.' 'The parcel of ground' here spoken of, is twice mentioned in Genesis: first, as the spot where the patriarch Jacob spread his tent, and erected an altar to the LORD^a. Here also it was, that "the bones of Joseph, which the children of Israel brought up out of Egypt," were buried; "and it became the inheritance of the children of Joseph". Indeed, it would seem from St. Stephen's Apology, as if *all* the patriarchs had been buried in this place^a. The spot is clearly distinguishable at the present day,—'a field which the LORD hath blessed'. In the words of a recent traveller^b,—'It is a most lovely spot: just such a choice piece of ground as a Father would give to a favourite Son. It is level and very fertile, like a garden; just at the entrance of a pleasant valley between hills. I have no doubt that the very ancient tomb which stands upon it, is rightly called Joseph's.'

But *why* is it specially recorded that the incident which follows took place 'near to the parcel of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph?' Chiefly, it may be thought, in order to lead us to connect that solemn bequest of the Patriarch to

^a Gen. xii. 6. ^a See Genesis xxxiii. 18. Joshua xxiv. 32.

^b See Gen. xxxiv.

^a Ac's vi. 16. ^a Genesis xxxiii. 18 to 20: see also xlviii. 22.

^a Joshua xxiv. 32.

^a Acts vii 15, 16.

^a Gen. xxvii. 27. ^b C. L. Higgins, Esq., of Turvey Abbey.

his Son, with the present incident,—somewhat in the manner which will be found pointed out below, in the note on ver. 42. ‘To this spot of ground our LORD came, that the Samaritans, who claimed to be inheritors of the Patriarch Jacob^c, might recognise Him; and be converted to CHRIST, the Patriarch’s legal heir^d.’

Shechem, or Sychar, lay between the mountains Gerizim and Ebal; and towards this spot, (‘the champaign over against Gilgal, beside the plains of Moreh^e’) is ALMIGHTY GOD found to have directed the eyes of His chosen People, at the end of their wandering in the Wilderness. They were commanded, when they should come into the Holy Land, to repair hither and put the blessing upon Mount Gerizim, and the curse upon Mount Ebal^f;—building on the latter mountain an altar, and stationing six of the tribes on Mount Gerizim to bless the people; and six, upon Ebal, to curse^g. The singular nation, known after the Captivity as ‘the Samaritans,’ are found to have made Shechem their chief place of residence; which lasted, as we see, down to the time of our LORD. Certain of them remain in the same locality to the present day.

Their origin has been already briefly noticed in the note on St. Matthew x. 6: the only authentic accounts we possess concerning them, being derived from the Bible^h. It seems probable that

^c See below, ver. 12.

^d Alcuin.

^e Deut. xi. 30.

^f Deut. xi. 29. ^g Deut. xxvii. 1 to 13. Joshua viii. 30 to 35.

^h See chiefly 2 Kings xvii.

along with the strange nations which the King of Assyria transplanted into the cities of Samaria, must have been mixed many of the ancient inhabitants of the Land. Such a remnant will have retained the worship of the true God, as anciently they professed to have done¹, notwithstanding the general idolatry of the Land^k; and this will account for their anxiety to be permitted to help the Jews, on their return from the Captivity, to rebuild the Temple. The Jews denied them the wished-for privilege; whereupon the Samaritans did all in their power to prevent the rebuilding of the City and Temple^l; and out of this, grew the hatred which ever after subsisted between the two races. The Samaritans, in the time of Sanballat, built a rival Temple of their own upon Mount Gerizim, (the scene of ancestral worship to which the woman refers in ver. 20,) and their name, as we have seen, became henceforth a reproach, and a contemptuous byword with the Jewish nation^m. That the Samaritans were wholly in the wrong, in all the points of controversy between the rival races, is certain: yet may the injustice of the sentiment with which they were regarded by the Jews be inferred from the many favourable notices bestowed upon them by our SAVIOURⁿ, — their prompt and hearty Faith, so far surpassing that

¹ Ezra iv. 2. See also 2 Kings xvii. 27, 28.

^k 2 Kings xvii. 29 to 33.

^l Ezra iv. 11 to 16, &c.

^m See the note on St. Luke x. 35.

ⁿ See St. Luke x. 33 to 35, and the note on ver. 37: xvii. 16 to 18, &c.

of their more favoured rivals,—and the astonishing use they had made of their Knowledge of the Way of Salvation, which had been wholly gleaned out of the Five Books of Moses.

Now Jacob's well was there.

6

And there it *is*, unmistakeably, to this day: a deep well, dug as was customary in the patriarchal age, in the place of sojourn^o; and which Tradition has always pointed out as the well of the patriarch Jacob. It is described as 'one of the most interesting objects in the Holy Land,—admitting of no doubt as to its identity with the spot St. John describes. It is exactly in the road which a traveller would take, in passing from Judæa into Galilee,—is not far from Sychar,—and above all it is the only well in the neighbourhood which fulfils the requirements of the Scripture record. This it does entirely,—being very deep, while all the other wells and springs lie near the surface, and the water of the larger portion can be reached even with the hand. The water, from its depth, is always exceedingly cool; on which account it is that persons are accustomed to visit it, in preference to other springs nearer the City^p.'

How striking a picture then is here set before us. He to whom Jacob had erected his Altar, and whom the patriarch Jacob himself foreshadowed,

^o Gen. xxi. 25 to 30: xxvi. 15, 18 to 22, 32, 33.

^p From the MS. already cited in the note on ver. 5.

sits down wearied on Jacob's well: and presently we shall behold Him surrounded by the chiefs of Twelve spiritual tribes—the men who are hereafter to 'judge the twelve tribes of Israel'.¹

JESUS therefore, being wearied with *His* journey, sat thus on the well:

'*Thus*,' in this place, means '*accordingly*.' That is, our SAVIOUR was weary, *and so* He sat on the well.

And how is it possible at this mention of a well, and the meeting which follows, to avoid recalling the many occasions in the Old Testament when a well was the scene of mighty transactions in the Economy of Grace? Isaac, and Jacob, and Moses, each found his future wife beside a well of water²: and here it is seen that one greater than these, their Divine Antitype, the Bridegroom, (as the Baptist has so lately called Him³,) takes to Himself His alien spouse, the Samaritan Church, at a well likewise⁴. On this head, see more in the note prefixed to the present Chapter. — Take notice then, that as His Death is our Life, so is His very weariness our refreshment. He thirsted that we might not thirst for ever.

Hunger is once recorded of the Son of Man⁵: Thirst, twice⁶. He partook of all our trials; and

¹ St. Matth. xix. 28: St. Luke xxii. 30.

² Gen. xxiv. 11 to 20: xxix. 2 to 10. Exod. ii. 15 to 17.

³ St. John iii. 29.

⁴ The Reader is referred to the note on St. Luke xxii. 12.

⁵ St. Mark xi. 12.

⁶ See St. John xix. 28.

was made conscious, by His own mysterious experience, of all our wants,—wants which the perfection of His nature doubtless rendered unspeakably acute and severe. It is discovered however, from what follows, that it was not meat from the city, or drink from the well, for which He so hungered and thirsted, as for the souls of the men of Sychar,—the soul of her who came to draw water. Consider verses 10, 31, 32, 34, 35.

The beloved Disciple proceeds to fix with exactness the time at which the event he is describing, occurred,—which it is his manner to do, more than the other Evangelists :

and it was about the sixth hour.

It was “the time of the Evening, even the time that women go out to draw water^a,”—namely, six o'clock. It has been already pointed out that St. John does not reckon the hours after the Jewish method,—(for it is clear that he wrote his Gospel at a distance from Judæa, and addressed it to persons who were familiar neither with the language nor with the customs of the Commonwealth of Israel^a;)—but, writing in Asia, he reckons time after the Asiatic method; which, singular to relate, corresponded exactly with our own. It was

[†] Consider the following places,—St. John i. 29, 35, 39, 43: ii. 1, 13: iii. 2: iv. 52: v. 1: vi. 4, 22: vii. 2, 14, 37: x. 22: xi. 6, 55: xii. 1, 12: xiii. 30: xix. 14, &c.

^a Genesis xxiv. 11.

^a See the note on St. John vi. 1. Compare with the text, St. John i. 39.

now *Evening* therefore, not *Noon* : and the Son of Man, weary with the length of His day's Journey, sat Him down to rest on Jacob's Well.

- 7 There cometh a Woman of Samaria to draw water : JESUS saith unto her, Give Me to drink.

This 'woman of Samaria,' or rather 'Samaritan woman,' seems to have belonged to the city of Sychar. She came to draw water from the well; little suspecting that before her return to the city she should draw her first draught of living water out of the Well of Salvation^b !

Are we to suppose that she now complied with the request of the Stranger? For she does not seem to have done so *afterwards*. Our LORD may have withdrawn from the well's mouth, while she let down her waterpot, before addressing her; and then opened the conversation in the manner recorded in the verse before us. In the meantime, the Evangelist proceeds to assign the reason why our SAVIOUR addressed His request to *her* ;—

- 8 (For His Disciples were gone away unto
9 the city to buy meat.) Then saith the Woman of Samaria unto Him, How is it that Thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria? (for the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans.)

That is,—No familiar intercourse takes place

^b Isaiah xiii. 3.

between them. The two nations might trade together,—buy and sell, as the Disciples were even now doing: but not ask favours of one another, or even drink out of the same vessel. Take notice however that this rancorous feeling subsisted rather on the side of the Jews*, than of the singular people towards whom our LORD manifested His favour on this, and so many subsequent occasions. It was '*the Jews*' who would 'have no dealings with *the Samaritans*.' Hence it may be thought that our SAVIOUR's request, and gracious manner,—so full of Divine Love, and gentleness unspeakable,—at once opened the heart of this Woman; even while she offered her water-pot to His parched lips, and gladly bestowed upon Him the favour which He had so far humbled Himself as to ask at her hands.

The words in the last clause, explaining the reason of the Woman's surprise at being so addressed by our LORD, are clearly not her's but the Evangelist's.

JESUS answered and said unto her, If¹⁰ thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give Me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of Him, and He would have given thee living water.

'*Living* water' is properly water from the spring,—as opposed to that which is stagnant. Our SA-

* See the note on St. Luke x. 36. Also St. John viii. 48, and St. Luke ix. 54.

VIOUR speaks of the life-giving Spirit under this figure, as that which is always stirring within the heart, and refreshing the soul of him who receives it.

But, by 'the gift of God,' in this place is meant *the gift of His Only SON*. Hear our learned Hooker: 'The gift whereby God hath made CHRIST a fountain of Life, is the conjunction of the nature of Man in the person of CHRIST; which gift, (saith He to the woman of Samaria,) if thou didst know, and *in that respect* understand *who it is* which asketh water of thee, thou wouldest ask of Him, that He might give thee living water.' So that what our LORD in the last chapter said to Nicodemus, He here repeats; namely, 'God so loved the world that He gave,' (observe, the *gift*,) 'His Only-begotten SON; that every one who believeth in Him should not perish, but have Everlasting Life^d.' The connexion of our SAVIOUR's reply with the Woman's question thus becomes apparent. She had reminded Him of the enmity which existed between her nation and His own. His answer implies that God loves *the whole World*, and wills the Salvation of *every one*.

'If thou knewest,' (saith our LORD), 'that God hath given and sent His SON; and that I who speak to thee am He; instead of rebuking Me for begging a draught of water at thy hands, thou wouldest have been the first to ask the same favour at Mine; nor would I have rebuked thee, much less would

^d St. John iii. 16.

I have denied thee: but I would have given thee to drink even of the water of Life!’

He ‘takes occasion therefore, from the well of Jacob that was there, to discourse, according to His Divine manner, of that water of Life which conveys pardon, peace, and the purification of the soul from sin; excludes the thirst of discontent, or the feverish desire of inferior and unreal blessings; and is to every one who truly receives it a well of water springing up to Everlasting Life*.’

And besides the illustration thus afforded of our LORD’s manner in availing Himself of some accidental outward circumstance on which to base His Divine Teaching, two things here strike us. First, He is found to open His Discourse on this occasion, as on so many others, with a hard saying,—a parable as it were,—and to leave the force of what He declares to be evolved afterwards’.—Next, we are struck with the form His Divine address to the woman takes. He wishes that she would *ask* of Him, in order that He might *give*. As a very ancient writer profoundly remarks,—‘No one can receive a Divine Gift who asks not for it[†]:’ and he illustrates his observation by alleging the striking language of the second Psalm; where the Eternal FATHER, addressing the SON, says,—‘Ask of Me, and I will give Thee the

* Altered from Dr. W. H. Mill.

† Consider such places as the following: St. John iii. 3: iv. 32: vi. 27, 33, 35: St. Matth. xvi. 6: St. Luke xvii. 37.

‡ Origen. —

Heathen for Thine inheritance^b.’ So, in another place it is enjoined,—‘Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you; for every one that asketh receiveth¹.’—‘It is highly instructive to trace this principle in our LORD’s conduct towards this woman, and indeed in all His dealings with mankind^k.’

Take notice that she has already learned to treat the unknown Stranger respectfully. She calls Him ‘Sir;’ and instead of denying the possibility of what He has asserted, asks Him to explain it.

- 11 The woman saith unto Him, Sir, Thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep: from whence then hast Thou that living water?

Striking indeed is the discovery that the well, concerning which we have already briefly spoken, and which Tradition has pointed out from the beginning as ‘Jacob’s well,’ should so remarkably retain the character here assigned to it. Travellers have found it to be of the depth of one hundred and five feet; and to this day, it contains ten or fifteen feet of living water.

The woman, whose attention is now effectually aroused, seems to imply that He must be some great One indeed, if, unaided by ordinary means, He can command such a supply of the pure

^b Ps. ii. 8.

¹ St. Matth. vii. 7, 8.

^k Williams.

ement, as shall render her future laborious
urneys to this spot superfluous. She proceeds:

Art Thou greater than our father Jacob, 12
hich gave us the well, and drank thereof
imself, and his children, and his cattle?

Perhaps when 'cattle' were supplied from a
ell, it was a proof that the water was abundant.
onsider Gen. xxiv. 14 and 19, 20. The argu-
ent here, is, — The great patriarch not only
ave his children and his cattle to drink of this
ell; but he drank of it himself. He knew of
o other resource whereby to quench his own
hirst. 'Art Thou greater than our father Jacob?'
—she therefore asks. And she already begins to
spect that she is addressing some great One in-
eed. That she little suspected the majesty of
e Stranger, whom she had found sitting on
acob's well, wearing the garb and using the
anguage of a Jew, our SAVIOUR has already
sured her. . He proceeds to let her know that
le is greater even than the Patriarch; not by
aunting Himself as such, but by contrasting
e nature of the gift which it was in His power
bestow, with that of Jacob. As it follows:

JESUS answered and said unto her, Who- 13
ever drinketh of this water shall thirst
gain: but whosoever drinketh of the water 14
at I shall give him shall never thirst; but
e water that I shall give him shall be in

him a well of water springing up into everlasting Life.

So spake He who proclaimed Himself of old as 'the Fountain of living waters¹;' with whom 'is the Well of Life^m;' and in whom ~~whosoever~~ believeth, 'shall never thirstⁿ.' To the same effect on a subsequent occasion we shall hear Him cry, saying, 'If any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink. He that believeth on Me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. But *this spake He of the Spirit*,' adds the Evangelist, 'which they that believe on Him should receive^o.' And of the HOLY SPIRIT our SAVIOUR speaks in this place also. It is the Water which *CHRIST* will give, because the SPIRIT proceedeth from the FATHER and the SON. 'The fountain of Life in mortal man soon fails; but that fountain of Life which is in the SPIRIT never fails. None can fathom it, nor tell the depth nor circumference thereof. And this water, of which he that drinks shall thirst again, is a type of all earthly desires, for nothing upon earth can satisfy the cravings of an immortal spirit; which, being made for God, can find rest in Him alone^p.'

15 The Woman saith unto Him, Sir, give me

¹ Jer. ii. 13: xvii. 13.

^m Ps. xxxvi. 9. Consider Jer. xviii. 14, (where see the margin;) and Rev. vii. 17: xxi. 6: xxii. 17.

ⁿ St. John vi. 35.

^o St. John vii. 37 to 39,—where see the notes. ^p Williams.

this water, that I thirst not, neither come hither to draw.

Of her history we know nothing beyond what is here recorded: but may not something be inferred even from her anxiety to be spared these daily journeys to the Well?

She asked in her simplicity, still supposing that it was water from the spring of which our SAVIOUR spake. What she meant however, was, in dutiful obedience, and faith, to ask for the thing which CHRIST had bade her ask for. Seeing therefore that she came to the Fountain of all Wisdom, (who knoweth our necessities before we ask, and our ignorance in asking,) He had compassion upon her infirmities; and that thing which for her unworthiness she dared not, and for her blindness she could not ask, GOD vouchsafed to give her for the worthiness of His SON JESUS CHRIST our LORD.

Very strange and startling is the turn which the dialogue at this place takes. Observe however, that what the woman had in effect said, was, that she desired *refreshment*: ('that I thirst not, neither come hither to draw:')—and to all such, saith not our SAVIOUR, 'Come unto *Me*'? As it follows:

JESUS saith unto her, Go, call thy husband, and come hither.

Why did our LORD thus allude to the man with whom she appears to have been unlawfully

connected? Was it only to give her an opportunity for the confession which follows?

- 17 The woman answered and said, I have no husband. Jesus said unto her, 'Thou
18 hast well said, I have no husband: for thou hast had five husbands: and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband: in that said thou truly.

By thus shewing Himself acquainted with past and present history of the stranger before Him, our SAVIOUR gave her the same evidence of His Godhead which He had already supplied to the guileless Nathanael^a. Nor can we doubt that in either case, certain unrevealed circumstances imparted peculiar wonder to His words. He proved by a single sentence that *His* eye had been the witness of what had been transacted in the strictest privacy, or with the utmost secrecy^r. His discovery, moreover, was attended in both cases with the same blessed results; for it follows,—

- 19 The woman saith unto Him, Sir, I perceive that Thou art a Prophet.

'The astonished Samaritan,—(respecting which there is no necessity for supposing that she was now living in sin, and in whom the errors of past life, whatever they might have been, had obscured that perception of moral truth which our SAVIOUR ordinarily required in the hearer

^a St. John i. 48.

^r See the note on St. John i. 48

His heavenly mysteries,)—confesses immediately that her informant is a prophet. None but one supernaturally enlightened could have discovered, from the midst of a foreign race, what might have been probably unknown to many of her own countrymen^s. She recognised our SAVIOUR at once as *a* prophet; and presently, as *the* 'Prophet' promised in the Law^t.—Take notice that while the Jews looked chiefly for a *Kingly*^u MESSIAH, the Samaritans seem to have dwelt chiefly on His *Prophetic* character: while the Baptist is found specially to notice the *Priestly* office of CHRIST^x.

Then pointing to Mount Gerizim, which stands full in sight of the spot where this conversation occurred, the Woman appeals to the immemorial worship of her people there, and claims the holy patriarchs as the authors of her race; saying,

Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; 20
and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place
where men ought to worship.

Does she thereby seek to give a speculative turn to the conversation which has grown painfully personal; as we ever seek to turn the edge of reproof, and to escape from what is private and particular by referring to that which is general and

* Dr. W. H. Mill.

^t Deut. xviii. 15, 18. Also St. John iv. 25, 29, 39.

^u Consider St. Matth. ii. 2. St. John i. 49: vi. 15: xii. 13. St. Luke xix. 38, &c.

^x See St. Matth. iii. 14. St. John i. 29, &c.

indifferent? Surely, not so!—Or do we behold in these words the statement of a prejudice, introduced by the speaker to outweigh a strong internal conviction? Is her conviction incomplete, from the difficulty she finds in recognising the prophetic character in *a Jew*?—Neither of these suggestions seems nearly so worthy of our acceptance as the following, offered by an excellent writer, who is pointing out that ‘her character is marked throughout with good.’ He says:—‘The gentleness with which she first received the request of a Jewish stranger; her pious memory of the patriarch Jacob; her readiness to believe; her expressions of respect throughout, saying ‘Master;’ her uncalled-for confession that it was not her husband, and her apparent innocence on that subject, when she found herself before a Prophet; *her immediate inquiry respecting a point which was evidently nearest her heart, of the most acceptable mode of worshipping GOD*; the fulness of her faith afterwards; and the expressions that shew she was evidently one of those who ‘waited for the Consolation of Israel:’—all these things prove that although, like many others, she may have been chosen under circumstances apparently the most adverse, yet that her heart was in the main right towards God: the shadow of Gerizim, the mount of blessing, beside which she dwelt, was not in vain upon her; for she inherited the blessing of the pure of heart, in that she had eyes to discern God.’

And surely it is impossible to call to mind this woman's case,—that of the sinner mentioned in the viith of St. Luke^z, and again of her who is recorded in the viiith of St. John^a,—as well as the case of the repentant malefactor,—without feeling that such examples are recorded not only for the consolation of great offenders, but also for the guidance of all. A great lesson of charity and forbearance is inculcated, when from a stem to all appearance so lifeless, the fruits of the Spirit are found so abundantly to spring.

JESUS saith unto her, Woman, believe 21
Me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither
in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, wor-
ship the FATHER.

In neither place, (He means,) to the exclusion of all other places. —‘*Believe Me,*’ He begins: for that is the necessary condition of all teaching that is to profit.—It may not be out of place to remind the reader that Christian Churches do not take the place of the Jewish synagogues, but of *the Temple of Jerusalem*, itself. — Our LORD’s phrase, ‘The hour cometh,’ denotes how close at hand were the days of the Gospel,—when, ‘from the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same’ God’s Name should ‘be great among the Gentiles^b.’

‘There was no necessity for CHRIST to shew

^a St. Luke vii. 37, &c. ^a St. John viii. 3, &c. ^b Mal. i. 11.

why the Fathers worshipped in that mountain, and the Jews in Jerusalem. He was therefore silent on that question ; but asserted the religious superiority of the Jews on another ground,—the ground not of place, but of knowledge^c.’ As it follows :

22 Ye worship ye know not what :

That is,—‘ You have lost the clear knowledge of the professed object of your worship, JEHOVAH the God of Israel, in forsaking that Tabernacle and Temple where He as truly fixed His habitation and His Glory in the days of David and Solomon, as He had fixed it in Shiloh of Ephraim before. You approach God in a way of your own invention ; and have recklessly cut off all genuine record of the facts of Sacred History, subsequent to the time of Moses, with every sacred book from which the religious supremacy of Judah and Mount Sion,—the Royalty of David, and the promised descent of MESSIAH from his line,—could be learned by the people^d.’

we know what we worship : for Salvation is of the Jews.

‘ For *we*, the Jews, can trace the line of human Hope from Moses, through David and all the prophets, of whom *ye* are ignorant.’—‘ He reckons Himself among the Jews, in condescension to the woman’s idea of Him : and says as if He were a Jewish prophet, ‘ *We* worship ;’ though it is certain

^c Chrysostom.

^d Abridged from Dr. W. H. Mill.

that He is the Being who is worshipped by all. The phrase 'for Salvation is of the Jews,' means that every thing calculated to amend and save the world,—the knowledge of God, the abhorrence of idols, and all the doctrines of that nature; even the very origin of our religion,—comes originally from the Jews^e, 'to whom pertaineth the Adoption,' (as the Apostle speaks,) 'and the Glory, and the Covenants, and the giving of the Law, and the service of God, and the promises; whose are the Fathers; and *of whom as concerning the flesh CHRIST came*.'—Our LORD proceeds:

But the hour cometh, and now is, when 23 the true worshippers shall worship the FATHER in spirit and in truth: for the FATHER seeketh such to worship Him.

'The Jewish worship then was far higher than the Samaritan; but even *it* was to be abolished^e.' And the accepted ones would no longer be those of a particular nation; but the distinction would be into false worshippers and true. Our LORD had already said, 'The hour is coming^h:' but here He adds, '*and now is*,'—to imply that the event foretold was not remote, like the predictions of the ancient Prophets; but close at hand, even at the doors.

Having said thus much concerning the place

^e Chrysostom.

^f Chrysostom.

^h Rom. ix. 4, 5.

ⁱ See above, ver. 21.

and the manner of acceptable worship, the Divine Speaker thus concludes :

- 24 God is a Spirit: and they that worship Him, must worship *Him* in Spirit and in Truth.

Of these words, and of those which go before in ver. 21, it would clearly be a wanton abuse to suppose that they convey a condemnation of externals in Religion; or imply that the place of Divine Worship is a matter of indifference to Almighty God.—Not so. But in an age when it was believed that *in Jerusalem only*, might God be acceptably worshipped; and among a people whose Law of ceremonial and outward observances had become so burdened by carnal traditions, that spiritual worship had well nigh disappeared altogether, it was of the last importance to vindicate the Mind and Will of Him who said ‘I will have Mercy and not Sacrificeⁱ,’ and, by His prophets, had so often claimed the spirit and the truth of those ordinances which in respect of the letter and the type had been punctually enough fulfilled^k.

- 25 The woman saith unto Him, I know that MESSIAS cometh, (which is called CHRIST:) when He is come, He will tell us all things.

Her words seem to have respect to what had

ⁱ St. Matth. ix. 13, quoting Hos. vi. 6.

^k Consider Isaiah i. 11 to 17, &c.

gone before. She had asked concerning the place of Divine Worship: the stranger has spoken concerning the manner of it also. In reply, she declares her belief in the near Advent of the MESSIAH,—(a Hebrew word, which St. John, for the second time¹, explains to mean the 'CHRIST,' that is, 'the Anointed One;')—and implies that all doubts of this nature will be effectually solved by Him, at His coming: 'a confession truly extraordinary, whether we consider the previous materials of this conviction, or the occasion that now drew it forth. The occasion which now drew forth this recognition of the great hope of mankind was simply what had just been spoken concerning the approaching establishment of a spiritual religion and worship. Her introduction therefore of the MESSIAH upon this, proves that it was a spiritual Leader,—a teacher of the true worship of God,—that she expected under that name and character. How different from the Jewish expectation of a conquering hero, and temporal deliverer! And how much more remarkable does this difference appear when we compare the materials for their respective convictions²! The truth had been discovered by the Samaritans, possessing only the Pentateuch; and missed by the Jews, though David and all the Prophets were theirs.—Little prepared however was the woman for the disclosure which was to follow:—

¹ See St. John i. 42.

² Dr. W. H. Mill.

- 26 JESUS saith unto her, I that speak unto thee am *He*.

‘And the result of this announcement was the conversion, not only of this woman, but of many of her countrymen.’ It is the first open declaration of the same nature which our SAVIOUR is recorded to have made. The next is to the man born blind. See St. John ix. 37.

- 27 And upon this came His Disciples, and marvelled that He talked with the Woman: yet no man said, What seekest Thou? or, Why talkest Thou with her?

Many are the recorded tokens of the deferential respect with which our LORD was regarded by His faithful followers. The Reader may be pleased at having such places as the following recalled to his remembrance:—ver. 33, below: St. John xii. 20 to 22: xiii. 22 to 24: xvi. 17 to 19: xxi. 12. St. Mark ix. 32.

But what was the precise ground of wonder to the Disciples on this occasion? Not, probably, so much at beholding their Divine Master discoursing with a female; for many followed His footsteps, and ministered to His needs; moreover, He is recorded on many occasions to have spoken to women. The Disciples seem rather to have been astonished at finding Him engaged in converse with *such* a woman, and at *such* a place. They were at a loss, (as the Evangelist himself, who

as one of their number, expressly intimates,) to now what He could want? or what could possibly be the subject of His conversation with her? Moreover, if the juncture at which they came up is considered, it will perhaps be thought that the Roman's astonishment, so far exceeding their own, must have added not a little to their perplexity and surprise.

They knew not that they beheld the Good Shepherd rejoicing over the recovery of the sheep which He had lost.

The woman then left her waterpot, and 28 went her way into the city;

An ancient writer remarks,—‘The woman is almost turned into an Apostle. So forcible are His words, that she leaves her water-pot to go to the city, and tell her townsmen of them^a.’ Another points out that ‘as the Apostles on being called left their nets, so does she leave her water-pot, to do the work of an Evangelist. She calls not one person, but a whole city^b.’ As it follows:—

and saith to the men, Come, see a Man, 29 which told me all things that ever I did : is not this the CHRIST ?

‘Come, see’ Him !—Like Philip, when he invited Nathanael^c, she knew that to see Him would be enough ; and that belief must surely follow. How

^a Origen.

^b Chrysostom.

^c St. John i. 46.

eager are the Saints of God ever found to be for the Salvation of others! how impatient to communicate to their brethren the knowledge of the way of Life! Consider the conduct of those whom our SAVIOUR first called,—St. Andrew, and St. Peter, and St. Philip^q. ‘Come and hear,’ (they seem to say,) and ‘I will declare what God hath done for my soul^r.’

30 Then they went out of the city, and came unto Him.

We shall be told, in ver. 39, that “many of the Samaritans of that City believed on Him for the saying of the woman” here recorded. How they acted when they came to CHRIST, we learn in verse 40.

In the meantime, it seems incumbent on us to notice how much of ministerial guidance, how many precious lessons, are obtainable from the portion of sacred narrative before us. First, the case of none is to be regarded as hopeless, or beyond the reach of ministerial zeal. Next, in so sacred a cause, we may converse with such as this fallen woman was: for “not of Apostles only, but of Believers generally, it was said ‘Ye are the salt of the earth;’ and *salt must mix with that which is to be salted*. It is to be remembered that our LORD ate and drank with Publicans and Sinners, neither refused He the invitation of the

^q See St. John i. 40, 41, 45, and the note on 46.

^r Ps. lxxvi. 16.

Pharisee. Such is our duty: such is the great exemplar of our lives^a." Nay more, from such instances of conversion to God, it is not obscurely hinted that the most blessed results of all may be hoped for. It seems to be implied, in addition, that discourse of this nature may most fitly take its rise from some accidental circumstance, and be suggested by the events of the moment. From what follows, it is further found that the pursuit of a lost soul should be meat and drink to him who is called to be a Shepherd of souls: and lastly, it may not be overlooked, that by conversing with this sinful woman openly, and in a public place, He teaches us to join the wisdom of the serpent to the harmlessness of the dove,—to give the enemy no opportunity for injurious insinuation.

And now, the Evangelist proceeds to detail what took place when the Disciples returned from Sychar, with the supply of food for the evening meal which they had been sent thither to provide.

In the mean while His Disciples prayed 31 Him, saying, Master, eat.

'All ask Him at once. This is not impatience in them, but simply tenderness for their Master^t.'

But He said unto them, I have meat to 32 eat that ye know not of.

Thus, in conformity with His Divine practice on other occasions, already noticed^u, our SAVIOUR

^a From a MS. Sermon by the Rev. W. J. Palmer.

^t Chrysostom.

^u See above, the note on ver. 10.

is found to have opened with a hard saying the subject on which He was no less desirous of enlightening His Disciples than they were of asking Him. He is willing that they should rejoice with Him over the recovery of His lost treasure^x, but He leads them to the subject by degrees; first arresting their attention by a few dark words, from which He may afterwards lead them up to something higher and spiritual.—Very Man, He truly hungered, truly thirsted. Yet were His bodily needs as nothing compared to the longings of His Human soul towards the Race which He had come to save; and these longings had been largely satisfied, while those needs continued urgent as ever. But all this the Disciples had yet to learn. They ‘knew not’ as yet the depth of the REDEEMER’S Love: they knew nothing as yet, experimentally, of a heart finding in Obedience the full supply of every earthly want: they ‘knew not’ that the woman whom they saw retiring from the well, was about to bring a whole City to the knowledge of the Truth.

33 Therefore said the Disciples one to another, Hath any man brought Him *ought* to eat?

‘What wonder,’ (exclaims Augustine,) that the woman did not understand about the water? Lo, the Disciples do not understand about the meat!’

Observe that they said this ‘one to another’;

^x Alluding to St. Luke xv. 6, 7, and 9, 10.

^y Compare Mal. iii. 16. See above, the note on ver. 27

—with that respectful reverence of which we find so many traces in the Gospels. And it is done in Heaven as it was done on Earth; for ‘Isaiah in a vision of the LORD in His Glory,’ when he heard the Seraphim crying, ‘Holy, Holy, Holy,’ noticed that besides covering their faces with their wings, one so ‘*cried unto another*’.—Our LORD hastens to release them from their perplexity.

JESUS saith unto them, My meat is to do ³⁴ the will of Him that sent Me, and to finish His work.

Our SAVIOUR here speaks of Himself not as God, but as Man. As Man, it was His meat and drink to do the FATHER’S Will. The Human Will in the One Person of our SAVIOUR CHRIST, we know was in all things conformed to His Divine Will, although it existed independently of it^a. His Divine Will was altogether one with the FATHER’S.

‘My *meat* is to do *the Will* of Him that *sent* Me:’ for, ‘Behold, I am come *to do Thy Will*, O God^b,’—was the prophetic language in which our SAVIOUR long before had spoken of His own future Advent in the flesh; adding that He found His *delight* therein. That CHRIST was the ‘*sent*’ of God, is the constant declaration of Holy Scripture. It shall suffice, once for all, to enumerate

^a Isaiah vi. 3.

^b See St. John v. 30 and vi. 38, where see two notes.

^c Psalm xl. 7, 8: as quoted Heb. x. 9.

the chief statements to this effect which are supplied by the writings of St. John alone^c.

But the Salvation of Mankind is the special '*Will of God*' here intended; for God '*willeth* that all men should be saved^d.' This is also '*His Work*;' for He is the sole cause of Salvation in Man: God not only '*willing*' our Salvation, but also '*working* in us both to will and to do^e.'

Nor only so; but the entire scheme of Man's Redemption was God's great work, as the Apostle so often declares^f: a work which addresses itself throughout to Man's Faith. Whence our SAVIOUR's declaration: 'This is the work of God, that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent^g.' And '*to finish*' this work is found to have been the great object of all He said and did on earth: from the Day of His Baptism until the Day of His Crucifixion; when He said '*It is finished*;' and bowed His head; and gave up the Ghost^h.

With obvious reference therefore to the '*door of Hope*'ⁱ which was even now being opened to the men of Sychar, our LORD intimates that He

^c See,—St. John iii. 17, 34: v. 23, 24, 30, 36, 37, 38: vi. 29, 38, 39, 40. 44, 57: vii. 16, 18, 23, 29: viii. 16, 18, 26, 29, 42: ix. 4: x. 36: xi. 42: xii. 43, 49: xiv. 24: xv. 21: xvi. 5: xvii. 3, 8, 18, 21, 23, 25: xx. 21.—1 St. John iv. 9, 10, 14.

^d 1 Tim. ii. 4.

^e Phil. ii. 13.

^f See Ephes. i. 5, &c.

^g St. John vi. 29.

^h St. John xix. 30.

ⁱ Hos. ii. 15. May not that prophecy have had reference to this very occasion? Observe that the situation of the valley of Achor is unknown; but it seems to have been not far from Gerizim.

has been refreshed and supported during the Disciples' absence by having effectually done the work of Him that sent Him.

Say not ye, There are yet four months, ³⁵ and *then* cometh harvest? behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to Harvest.

The interval between the season of sowing and the season of reaping in Judæa, was four months. Our LORD's words are allusive to this circumstance, and perhaps to some proverbial saying which may have grown out of it. But the entire passage before us has been thought difficult, and given rise to so much conjectural criticism, that it may be as well in explaining it to shew its connexion with what goes before and what follows.

The Disciples had been pressing our Divine LORD to partake of food. He told them in reply that it was food to Him to do His FATHER's will, and to finish His work. Then, addressing them as the men who were destined to become His blessed instruments therein:—‘At sced-time,’ saith He, ‘say ye not: Pass four months and it will be Harvest? But look abroad on yonder fields, and take notice that the wheat is ripe already, and the time of Harvest *hath come*.’ It was in fact shortly after the Passover season that He thus spake. The wheat was therefore fully ripe; presenting that *whitish* appearance, which

many ancient writers have described, and a few modern travellers have noticed.

We are of course left to infer that to the Divine Speaker's inner vision, a corresponding spectacle discovered itself in respect of the region where that part of the spiritual 'Harvest of the Earth' was also 'ripe' already^{*}; and that He beheld the season for thrusting in the sickle, close at hand. Moreover, He seems to imply that as the fields of Samaria were now teeming with ripe grain, in the sowing of which His Disciples had had no share,—just so was it in respect of the fruits of the spiritual Kingdom. The Patriarchs and Prophets of old had *sown*; the seed had fallen into honest and good hearts; and there had been an abundant increase. The Apostles of CHRIST would therefore now have but to *reap*; that is, to bring to the full knowledge of the Gospel, hearts already well prepared and fully disposed to receive the Heavenly message. The privilege of such reaping is stated in the words which follow:

- 36 And he that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal.

That is,—Between an ordinary reaper and yourselves, there will be this mighty difference; that whereas *he* receiveth wages, and garnereth for another in an earthly barn, the fruit which wasteth away and perisheth,—*ye*, besides your great hire, shall gather immortal souls into the

^{*} Rev. xiv. 15.

heavenly Garner, unto Life Eternal, to be your crown of rejoicing in the Great Day of the Lord¹.—With such language does the Blessed Speaker sustain the spirits, and kindle the desires of His lowly followers: adding,

that both he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together.

Our Lord is declaring another point of contrast between earthly and heavenly reaping. It is as if He had said,—Now, here on earth, he that sows hath all the labour, and he that reaps hath all the joy; but the consequences of what I have been describing will be that the Sower shall partake in the Reaper's bliss: My ancient Saints,—the Patriarchs and the Prophets of Israel,—shall rejoice together with you, My Apostles.—‘*Rejoice together:*’ for if the Repentance of one sinner sufficeth to fill beholding Angels with Joy^m, what rapture at the eternal bliss of many Saints, must fill the hearts of such as have been God's instruments in turning these to righteousnessⁿ!

And surely, thrice glorious is the anticipation thus held out,—the hint, namely, of the bliss in store for all those who have already gone to their rest, and who hereafter shall go, with nothing but the experience of labour, for which they beheld no fruit! Doubtless, they who thus went on their way weeping, and bearing forth good seed, shall come

¹ Consider 1 Thess. ii. 19.

^m St. Luke xv. 7, 10.

ⁿ Dan. xii. 3.

again with joy, and even bring their sheaves with them°!

- 37 And herein is that saying true, One soweth, and another reapeth.

The meaning is,—That common proverb, ‘One soweth and another reapeth,’ is nevertheless true; and its truth consists in the fact, that here also, he who reaps is a different person from him who sowed. As it follows :

- 38 I sent you to reap that whereon ye bestowed no labour : other men laboured, and ye are entered into their labours.

The sower and the reaper are therefore different persons ; and so far the saying is true : but as the saying is commonly employed to denote that one has all the labour, the other all the rejoicing, it is no longer applicable ; for *the rejoicing* to the sower and to the reaper is the same.

‘I sent you to reap :’ not that their LORD had sent them yet ; but since they were named ‘Apostles,’ that is ‘[men] sent,’ from the first^p, the expression was correct at all times after they had once been called. The rest of the verse has been explained already, by anticipation. But the repeated mention of ministerial labour in this place, suggests a reference to such passages of St. Paul

° Ps. cxxvi. 6.

^p St. Luke vi. 13.

as are noticed at foot^q; while the allusion in ver. 36, to the 'joy in harvest,' recalls Isaiah ix. 3.

The Evangelist now proceeds with the history of the Samaritans.

And many of the Samaritans of that city ³⁹ believed on Him for the saying of the woman, which testified, He told me all that ever I did,

In illustration of this and the next verse, what the Evangelist has already stated in verses 29 and 30 should be recalled.—Take notice of the largeness of the faith here described; surpassing even that of the Woman herself. 'Is not this the CHRIST?' she had timidly asked: but many of these men are found to have 'believed on Him,'—that is, to have believed that it *was* He,—from her report alone. Whatever her own faith may have been, she had at least seen our SAVIOUR: but the men of Sychar were more blessed, in that though they had not hitherto seen Him, they had yet believed^r. All this was however *His* gift; no less than the request which follows.

So when the Samaritans were come unto ⁴⁰ Him, they besought Him that He would tarry with them: and He abode there two days.

Bequeathing to the City which so honourably entertained Him, as it would seem, an abiding

^q 1 Cor. xv. 10. 2 Cor. xi. 23. Gal. iv. 11. Col. i. 29. Phil. ii. 16. 1 Thess. ii. 9: iii. 5. 2 Thess. iii. 8. 1 Tim. iv. 10: v. 17, &c.

^r St. John xx. 29.

blessing. Unlike Capernaum, Chorazin, and Bethsaida, where our Lord was rejected and despised, and which have since utterly disappeared, Sychar, (or as it is now called 'Nablous,') is in a flourishing condition to the present day. 'Its prosperity is far too striking to be overlooked by the traveller; having nothing of the lifeless, indolent, poverty-stricken appearance of almost all the other towns of the country. On the contrary, its neighbourhood is fertile : refreshing springs run through its streets : a great amount of activity and bustle is found among the inhabitants, who seem a thriving prosperous people : the bazaars are crowded ; and altogether its appearance is so different from other places, that you are induced to think that there must be some especial circumstances connected with its locality, more favourable than ordinary. This however does not appear to be the case^a.'

Josephus remarks that it is a three days' journey out of Judæa into Galilee. The two days therefore which would have sufficed to conduct our SAVIOUR back to Capernaum, He passed among the men of Sychar : and thus, the faith of the 'nobleman,' of whom we shall read in ver. 46, and whose son was even now a-dying, was taxed to the uttermost. See more in the note on ver. 47 ; and consider, in connexion with the constraint exercised by the men of Sychar, the remarks which were offered on St. Luke xxiv. 29.—It follows :

41 And many more believed because of His

^a From the MS. quoted above, on verses 5 and 6. '

own word: and said unto the Woman, Now ⁴² we believe, not because of thy saying: for we have heard *Him* ourselves, and know that this is indeed the CHRIST, the SAVIOUR of the World.

'Because of His own *Word*,' the men of Sychar became believers: not because of any *Miracles* which He wrought among them. 'Their grounds were therefore not those overpowering proofs of His Divinity which were yet insufficient to convince the stubborn Jews. All that these good Samaritans appear to have possessed, or sought, was the sober conviction with which our LORD's prophetic character inspired them; and on the strength of which they proclaim Him, in the true spirit of knowledge and charity united, the SAVIOUR of the whole World!'

And truly, if their faith was so readily kindled, even from the woman's report of Him, what must have been the effect of His prolonged converse on their hearts! If the rising of the Day-Star filled them with light and heat, what must have been wrought in them by the noontide glow of CHRIST's actual presence! 'We have *heard* Him ourselves,' (they say,) 'and *know*:' for 'Faith cometh by hearing'. Accordingly, their Faith is ample, and their Confession complete:—'This is indeed the CHRIST, the SAVIOUR of the World!'

It has been admirably pointed out, that 'this

* Dr. W. H. Mill.

† Rom. x, 17.

was not however their final state ; nor designed to be represented by the inspired historian as such. When the mysteries of human Redemption were accomplished and CHRIST was glorified, then we are told by St. Luke, in the book of the Acts, how Samaria received the Word of GOD ; first, by the preaching and *Baptism* of Philip the Evangelist, and afterwards by Apostolic *Confirmation*, and the imposition of hands. Thus, doubtless, were these men of Sychar in particular actually admitted into that Kingdom for which their previous reception of its LORD had prepared them, and which He described as on the point of manifestation to the World*.

It is impossible to dismiss this great incident,—which is none other than the beginning of the fulfilment of the prophecies made to Abraham, confirmed to Isaac, and renewed to Jacob, without dwelling a little further upon its precious details. We have read of the first great gathering in of the aliens, (for the Samaritans were reckoned almost with the very heathen†,) into the fold of CHRIST. Here it is that the Heavenly Canaan first opens to our sight. Viewed from this spot of holy ground what new and unexpected light is found to fall on many a familiar incident of Old Testament History, and how beautiful does the design of the inspired narrative straightway become !

We are reminded, before all things, of that original mention of Sichem as the first place of the Patri-

* Dr. W. H. Mill.

† St. Matth. x. 5.

arch Abraham's rest, to which attention was called above^a. There, he received the promise; there, JEHOVAH (and it was none other than CHRIST Jesus Himself!) appeared to him; and there, he builded his first altar. The spot thus singularly hallowed as the first place at which God had appeared to man, remained for ever holy in the eyes of Abraham's descendants. Here Jacob, when he returned with his family into Canaan, hid all the strange gods which were in their hand^a. Here arose 'the Sanctuary of the LORD^b,' and here was one of the cities of refuge^c. To this place, Joshua solemnly summoned the Twelve Tribes before his death, and renewed the covenant with them after the conquest and partition of the Land^d. Here Abimelech, (Joseph's descendant^e;) was made king^f; and here Rehoboam was crowned^g. Jeroboam likewise 'built Shechem in Mount Ephraim^h, and dwelt thereinⁱ.' Here therefore, where the Ten Tribes rebelled against the House of David^k, was David's Son about to 'gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad^l.'

^a See the first note on the present chapter.

^a Gen. xxv. 4.

^b Josh. xxiv. 26.

^c Josh. xx. 7 : xxi. 21, and 1 Chron. vi. 67.

^d Joshua xxiv. 1 to 28.

^e Compare Joshua xvii. 2, with Judges vi. 11, vii. 1, and ix. 1.

^f Judges ix. 1 to 6.

^g 1 Kings xii. 1.

^h For Abimelech had 'beaten down the city, and sowed it with salt.'—Judges ix. 45.

ⁱ 1 Kings xii. 25.

^k 1 Kings xii. 1 to 20.

^l St. John xi. 52.

Very striking is the consideration, suggested by the actual record of the Evangelist^m, that the spot of ground where our SAVIOUR now rested, and where He was destined to receive the first earnest of His spiritual inheritanceⁿ, was the same which had become *the first possession* of any of His Ancestors after the flesh. Machpelah seems to have been a place of burial, and no more; not so the 'parcel of a field' where Jacob spread his tent on returning to Canaan after his absence of twenty years at Haran. This piece of ground had already been the property of his grandfather Abraham^o, and now became his own by renewed purchase of the same family from whom Abraham had originally obtained it^p. Subsequently, by right of conquest also^q, had the Patriarch secured this precious spot of ground to himself and his family; bequeathing it to Joseph, 'a portion,' (or 'Shechem' as the Hebrew expresses it,) 'above his brethren,'—in token that the right of primogeniture should be his^r. To Joseph's descendants (the tribe of Ephraim) this piece of territory is accordingly found to have afterwards belonged: among the rest to Joshua, the temporal Jesus, Joseph's immediate descendant, who conquered the entire Land,—beginning his conquest almost at this very place^s. The spot is found to have been very

^m In ver. 5. ⁿ Consider Ps. ii. 7, 8. ^o Acts vii. 16.

^p Gen. xxxiii. 19. Joshua xxiv. 32. ^q Gen. xlviii. 22.

^r Deut. xxi. 17. 1 Chron. v. 2. Ezek. xlvii. 13. ^s See Joshua vii.

fertile, and well adapted from the beginning for pasturing of sheep¹;—a character which it preserves in a remarkable manner to the present day.

An ancient writer says strikingly,—“This parcel of ground I conceive to have been left not so much to Joseph, as to CHRIST, of whom Joseph was a type; and whom the Sun, the Moon, and all the Stars, truly adore².” It was in fact the scene of the youthful patriarch’s dreams³; and, (what is remarkable,) after an interval of just 1700 years, this ‘parcel of ground’ is found to have retained its ancient distinction of fruitfulness in corn; for, as we have seen, the abundant harvest which grew on the spot suggested the form of discourse which our SAVIOUR adopted in addressing His Disciples on the present occasion⁴. At Jacob’s well, therefore, and in ‘the parcel of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph,’ did the discourse above recorded, and which led to such memorable results, occur; whereby Joseph became that ‘fruitful bough, even a fruitful bough *by a well*⁵,’ of which the dying Patriarch spake; ‘whose branches run over the wall.’

Now after two days He departed thence, 43 and went into Galilee.

Our LORD was on His way from Judæa into Galilee, when the incident occurred which led to His sojourn of two days at Sychar⁶. Those two

¹ Gen. xxxvii. 12, 13.

² Alcuin.

³ See Gen. xxxvii. 5 to 9.

⁴ See above, ver. 35 to 38.

⁵ Consider also Deut. xxxiii. 28.

⁶ See above, ver. 8.

It is uncertain who and what this person was; but probably he belonged to the Court and Palace of King Herod. Hence the marginal suggestion that we should translate 'Courtier.' If Chusa, (Herod's Steward), was a believer as well as his wifeⁿ, the 'Nobleman' may have been Chuza himself. But he was doubtless a Jew; one of those Galilæans, it may be thought, who are spoken of above as having 'seen all the things which Jesus did at Jerusalem at the Feast.'

- 47 When he heard that Jesus was come out of Judæa into Galilee, he went unto Him, and besought Him that He would come down, and heal his son: for he was at the point of death.

Let us notice what is here revealed, (doubtless for *our* profit,) and not miss the precious teaching which it seems intended to convey.—Here was a child sick of a fever at Capernaum. His Father had been anxiously expecting our SAVIOUR's return to that City; but in vain. He knew that CHRIST could save his child, and despaired of help from any other source. Every hour at last became of importance. Presently, he is told that the Great Physician has arrived at Cana. We may judge of the Father's distress and anxiety, by finding that he trusts no messenger, (though a man of such rank as to have many servants at his command^o), but leaving the object of his love

ⁿ St. Luke viii. 3.

^o See below, ver. 51.

at the point of Death at Capernaum, repairs in person to Cana,—a distance of some 6 or 8 hours. How untoward must he have thought our Lord's prolonged absence! How 'unlucky' must that two-days' sojourn at Sychar, and now this halt at Cana, have seemed! Yet, perceive we not that the Great Physician had been thereby dealing no less lovingly with the Father, than He was prepared now to deal with the Son? Was it not to try the man's faith, and because He designed his great blessedness, that CHRIST had first lingered on the road, and now directed His steps not to Capernaum, but to Cana;—'knowing that tribulation,' as St. Paul testifies,) and 'the trying of faith,' (as St. James declares^p), 'worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope; and hope maketh not ashamed^q?'—For more on this subject, see the note on St. Luke v. 17; and especially the notes on St. Mark v. 24 and 35.

It was doubtless Faith which brought this man from Capernaum to Cana, in search of our SAVIOUR: yet it is found to have been a most imperfect Faith. Thus, he does not believe that CHRIST can cure his son at a distance^r. He thinks (like the Ruler of the Synagogue) that He must perforce 'come down,' and perhaps that He must lay His Hand upon the sufferer, in order to his recovery^s. He reminds us of the Father of the

^p St. James i. 3.

^q Romans v. 3 to 5.

^r And see below, the note on ver. 49.

^s See St. Matth. ix. 18.

lunatic Boy^t, rather than of the Gentile Centurion^u, or the Woman of Canaan^z, or even the Ten Lepers^v. To this slowness of heart, therefore, our SAVIOUR replies in the first instance.

- 48 Then said JESUS unto him, Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe.

‘Ye,’—that is, ye Jews, My countrymen: so unlike those Samaritan aliens whom I have lately left, and among whom I wrought no signs. Take notice that these words fully disclose to us the reason of the discipline to which the Holy One was subjecting the man who addressed Him; and who, while he came to obtain help for his son, little suspected that he was even in greater want of the Divine Physician, himself. Nothing but *the sight* of miracles and wonders would produce conviction^z: whereas Faith and Sight are in a manner opposites. What a contrast, by the way, was all this to the scene we have been so lately witnessing beside Samaria’s Well,—where He who spoke was a stranger, and they who listened were members of a despised race!

- 49 The Nobleman saith unto Him, Sir, come down ere my child die.

For he had left him ‘at the point of death’^a; and his agony will brook no delay. From his

^t See St. Mark ix. 22.

^u See St. Matth. xv. 27.

^z Consider 1 Cor. i. 22.

^u See St. Matth. vii. 8, 9.

^v See St. Matth. viii. 2.

^a See ver. 47.

ply, we perceive yet more clearly the limits of the nobleman's faith. He supposes CHRIST's power will be ineffectual if his child dies^b. How far was he, in the meantime, from realizing the object of those miraculous cures which he seems to have been already acquainted with, and of which he was even now imploring the repetition ! He knew not that the purpose of CHRIST's coming was to build up the feeble in Faith ; and that the chief object with which He healed bodily sickness, was to remedy spiritual infirmity.

JESUS saith unto Him, Go thy way, thy son liveth.

The Physician of souls, seeing that His first medicine avails not, mercifully tries another treatment ; and wins by benefits the man whom he could not move by reproaches. Thereby teaching those in the Ministry that by various methods are men to be gained over ; and reminding us that resources may yet be discovered, even after our best-devised means have failed.

Take notice of the Wisdom of the course our SAVIOUR pursued with this man. Had He complied with his request,—gone down with him to Capernaum, and there healed his son,—the nobleman's faith must for ever have remained weak ; for he would have ascribed to CHRIST's *presence* what was the result only of His *power*. Had He, on the contrary, sent the nobleman away dis-

^b See above, the latter part of the note on ver. 47.

A PLAIN COMMENTARY

appointed, the small spark of faith in I have been entirely quenched. By half of the man's petition, and denying He fanned that spark at once into a flame.

When the Centurion told our SAVIOUR *servant* 'lying at home sick of the palsy, tormented,' he received for answer, 'I will and heal him^d,'—a favour which he asked. Here our LORD is entreated by a man to come down and heal *his son*, a *fusus*. The reason of this diversity of request is to be found in the spiritual condition of the two individuals, respectively. The imperfect faith was perfected by our LORD's coming down: the perfection of the Centurion's faith was displayed by our LORD's coming down. Both men become the instructors: the first, in the way of warfare; the second, in the way of example.

It seems worth pointing out that as our LORD abode for 'two days' at Sychar, and stored the young man; so also when He Lazarus was sick, 'He abode two days in the place where He was,' and then announced His intention of going to 'awake him out of the dead.' Were not these acts typical of His resurrection 'on the third day?' according to the prophet,—'After two days will He

* From Toletus.

^d St. Matth. vii

• St. John xi. 6, 11.

in the third day He will raise us up, and we shall live in His sight^f.'

And the man believed the word that JESUS had spoken unto him, and he went his way.

Retracing his steps as we may suppose to Capernaum, with joy not unmingled with anxiety; and travelling, as we shall presently discover, by night^g. Take notice that it is not here said of the nobleman that he believed in CHRIST. This effect was to follow, and is declared to have followed in ver. 53; but the first necessary step had been taken, inasmuch as *he believed His word*: that is, he believed it would be as CHRIST had said; and departed, convinced that his son was already in the way of recovery. He will have afterwards attained the conviction that the Holy One, besides announcing his child's recovery, had been the Author of it likewise.

And as he was now going down, his servants met him, and told *him*, saying, Thy son liveth.

As soon as the wonderful change in the young man's state was witnessed, the servants had been despatched in quest of their Master; and now they greet him with the very words which he had already heard from the lips of CHRIST.

Then enquired he of them the hour when he began to amend.

^f Hosea vi. 2.

^g See below, the note on ver. 52.

How natural is this! 'He wished to find out,' (observes Chrysostom,) 'whether the recovery was accidental, or owing to our LORD's Word.'

And they said unto him, Yesterday at the seventh hour the fever left him.

He asked his servants when the child *began to amend*? They tell him in reply, that this has been no progressive recovery: but that, yesterday evening, his son suddenly—*got well*. 'At the seventh hour, *the fever left him*.' . . . The reader is referred to what has been already offered on this striking subject in the Commentary on the latter part of St. Mark i. 31.

'The seventh hour' in the present Gospel denotes either seven o'clock in the morning, or seven in the evening: not *one* o'clock,—according to the Jewish mode of reckoning Time. This has been already explained on ver. 6. In this place therefore, it will have been seven o'clock in the *evening*; for Capernaum is certainly not more than 8 hours distant from Cana, and the servants met the nobleman on his way back,—probably when he had got about half way. It was however *the morrow*, when they met, as we discover from the servants' language; which could not have been the case had the miracle been wrought, and the journey commenced, in the morning.

We have heard the Nobleman's inquiry, and his servants' reply. The result will remind us of the truth of the remark, that the more attentively

we scrutinize the works and the ways of God, the more will our Faith be nourished and increased.

So the father knew that *it was* at the 53 same hour,

Rather,—‘ that [the fever left him] at the same hour,’—

in the which JESUS said unto him, Thy son liveth: and himself believed, and his whole house.

Words which evidently imply at least thus much;—that when the Father heard that his child had been restored to perfect health at seven o'clock on the previous evening,—and connected with this, the circumstance that in the self-same hour our LORD had conveyed to him the comfortable assurance, ‘Thy son liveth,’—the mist cleared up from his soul at once, and he became a true believer in JESUS CHRIST. He had arrived, although by slow and painful steps, at that point of Faith with which the Centurion originally came to CHRIST. He perceived that he had been discoursing with One who could say to a fever, as to a servant, ‘Go, and he goeth^b.’ Thus a single sentence from the lips of the LORD of Life, (as Cyril of Alexandria remarks,) brought healing at once to two souls! The nobleman ‘himself believed;’ nor only so, but he became the head of a believing household. Such then was the gracious

^b See the note on St. Matth. viii. 9.

design with which illness had been sent into this man's family! It was the Hand of Love which had brought his child to the brink of the grave, and rendered the skill of the physicians ineffectual. Now all these things 'were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope¹.'

Venerable Bede points out that 'Faith, like the other virtues, is formed gradually; and has its beginning, growth, and maturity. The nobleman's faith had its beginning, when he asked for his son's recovery; its growth, when he believed our LORD's words, 'Thy son liveth;' but it did not reach maturity, until the announcement of the fact by his servants.'

- 54 This is again the second miracle *that* JESUS did, when He was come out of Judæa into Galilee.

Rather,—“This second miracle again JESUS did.” The Evangelist has described one other famous miracle, (The Water made Wine,) and this is the second. Both were wrought at Cana of Galilee; and they are brought into mysterious prominence by the very manner in which St. John records them: the one, as the '*beginning of miracles*²;' the other, as the '*second miracle*.'

¹ Rom. xv. 4.

² St. John ii. 11.

A

PLAIN COMMENTARY

ON THE FIFTH CHAPTER OF

St. John's Gospel.

1 JESUS on the Sabbath day cureth him that was diseased eight and thirty years. 10 The Jews therefore cavil, and persecute Him for it. 17 He answereth for Himself, and reproveth them, shewing by the testimony of His FATHER, 82 of John, 86 of His Works, 89 and of the Scriptures, who He is.

V. AFTER this there was a Feast of the 1 Jews ; and JESUS went up to Jerusalem.

The Feast of the Passover is probably intended, —the second of the four Passover Seasons indicated in the Gospels.

Now there is at Jerusalem by the sheep 2 market a Pool, which is called in the Hebrew tongue Bethesda, having five porches.

Rather,—“by the Sheep-gate,”—as in the margin *. “Bethesda” means either “House of Mercy,” or “House of Washing.”—See the note on St. John vi. 1.—It may be also worth observing that the Greek word which here (and in St. John ix. 7) is translated ‘Pool,’ (literally ‘a Bath for swimming in’), was the name which the early Christians gave to their Baptisteries, and to their

* Compare Nehemiah iii. 1 : xii. 39.

Baptismal Fonts. Consider the foot note (r) on St. Luke v. 10: and the first note on St. Matthew xiii. 47. Bethesda itself, with its five porticoes, was evidently a considerable edifice; for it follows:—

- 3 In these lay a great multitude of impotent folk, of blind, halt, withered, waiting for the moving of the water.

The Water of this Bath, which availed to heal every form of disorder, (as we read in the next verse), was clearly typical of the Water of Baptism: which heals the soul by virtue of a Divine Efficacy imparted to it. Mark the contrast, however, between the Laver of Regeneration^b, unexhausted and inexhaustible,—the “Fountain opened to the House of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for Sin and for Uncleaness^c,”—and the Pool of Bethesda, available only for a single cure! . . . It was because a created Angel imparted healing virtue in the one case; whereas the CREATOR Himself, by going down into Jordan, sanctified *all* Waters ‘to the mystical washing away of Sin^d.’ See more in the note on ver. 7.

The analogies of Holy Scripture are endless. As in Nature, so in Grace, the more attentively we gaze, the more we seem to discover. Pursuing the contrast already hazarded, how obvious is it to remark that the Law, (*having five Books*, like the

^b See Tit. iii. 4,—where the word ‘Laver,’ is rendered ‘Washing.’

^c Zechariah xiii. 1.

^d See the Baptismal Service.

Building here described, 'having five Porches,') did but display,—revealed without being able to remove,—the different aspects of Human Infirmary!

For an Angel went down at a certain⁴ season into the pool, and troubled the water; whosoever then first after the troubling of the water stepped in, was made whole of whatsoever disease he had.

Perhaps, all that met the eye, in the Pool of Bethesda, was "*the moving* of the water,"—that is, the agitation of its surface. And this may *possibly* have been referable to some natural cause,—as, to a spring which bubbled up from below; or to a gust of wind which came down upon it: either of which causes would suffice to produce a ripple on the water. But the Bible lifts the veil from the unseen world, and tells us of things which unassisted Reason could never have suspected. It discovers to us the Ministry of Angels. Reason may have known that the Wind was moving the Water; but Faith here informs Reason that *an Angel was moving the Wind*. See the note on St. Luke xxii. 3.

And a certain man was there, which had⁵ an infirmity thirty and eight years.

While so many things which we earnestly desire to know, are carefully kept from us in the Gospels, why are we informed of such a thing as this, which does not *seem* to concern us much? The same reverent inquiry is also suggested by St.

Luke viii. 42 and 43: xiii. 11, 16. Are we, in this case, to see an emblem of Israel's punishment, in the sufferings of one of Israel's descendants; and to connect *his* thirty and eight years of affliction, with *theirs*? This suggestion, which is an old one, and is humbly repeated, shall not be pressed. Neither shall the analogy suggested, be pursued. It shall but be observed concerning it, that such remarks are *not foreign* to the spirit of Inspired Scriptural Exposition: and that as the dignity, depth, and importance of every word and deed of the Incarnate JEHOVAH cannot possibly be over-rated; so neither can the written record of His actions be supposed to be in any respect trivial, unmeaning, or superfluous, either.

- 6 When JESUS saw him lie, and knew that he had been now a long time *in that case*, He saith unto him, Wilt thou be made whole?

Into the House with the five porches, our SAVIOUR enters; and moving past the crowd of sufferers described in verse 3, He singles out to be the special object of His Mercy one infirm person, who seems to have been in greater need than any of the rest:—a man without a single friend; and in whose case Hope deferred for eight and thirty years must have made the heart very sick. Let the infirm, and the friendless, and the despairing, take comfort from this wondrous narrative.

The impotent man answered Him, Sir, 7 I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool : but while I am coming, another steppeth down before me.

He makes no churlish answer, observe. He simply states his great misery and his extreme need. He perhaps secretly wished, that the 'Man' he spoke to would befriend him when next the troubled water betokened the Angel's presence. Little did he suspect that it was the Creator of Angels with whom He was conversing ! His utter helplessness reminds us of another case of suffering,—*that* of the Paralytic, who depended entirely on the active piety of four friends to bring him to CHRIST. The Reader is referred to the latter part of the note on St. Mark ii. 3 ; also to the note on St. Luke v. 20 : after calling attention to which, it is only fair to remark that the present miracle seems further to teach that God does not so *tie Himself* to Sacraments,—has not so annexed the bestowal of His favours to outward and appointed means,—as that He will never, under *any* circumstances, be induced to bestow Sacramental grace without the Sacramental sign. The same lesson is taught by Numbers xi. 16, 17, and 24 to 26. See the notes on St. John iii. 5 : also on St. John vi. 53.

Not only in his peculiar *helplessness* does this man remind us of the Paralytic ; but in the mention made, in the case of either, *of his sins*. Com-

pare St. Mark ii. 5, and the notes on the latter part of that verse.

See also the notes on the next verse, (ver. 8), of the present chapter.

- 8 JESUS saith unto him, Rise, take up thy bed, and walk.

The same three acts of Faith which our LORD required of the man sick of the Palsy. See St. Mark ii. 9, and the notes on St. Mark ii. 11 and 12.

Observe that the man, (in the third chapter of the Acts), not *walked* but *leaped*, when healed by St. Peter and St. John; neither is he said to have carried his bed:—perhaps, because in *his* case, there had been no punishment overtaking; but he had been “*lame from his mother’s womb*!”

- 9 And immediately the man was made whole, and took up his bed, and walked: and on the same day was the Sabbath.

On which day our Blessed LORD is repeatedly declared to have performed His acts of Mercy. See the note on St. Luke iv. 36; and consider the following places:—St. Mark iii. 1 to 5. St. Luke iv. 31 to 35: also 38 to 39: xiv. 1 to 4. St. John ix. 14. Thereby, He declared plainly that the Jewish Sabbath was only a temporary institution, which had attained its fulfilment in Him; since

¹ See Acts iii. 2 to 8.

* *Him* is our Eternal Rest,—which the Sabbath overshadowed. See Colossians ii. 16, 17.

The Jews therefore said unto him that 10
was cured, It is the Sabbath day : it is not
awful for thee to carry *thy* bed.

Consider the following texts :—Exodus xxxi. 14,
15 : Numbers xv. 33 to 36 : Nehemiah xiii. 19,
(where burdens of *merchandize* alone are for-
bidden :) Jeremiah xvii. 21, 22 : St. Mark ix. 16.
—Concerning “the Jews,” see the note on ver. 15.

He answered them, He that made me 11
whole, the same said unto me, Take up thy
bed, and walk.

The character of the man whom our SAVIOUR
had restored, begins immediately to display itself.
He says,—I have a mighty warrant for carrying
my bed. It was the command of One, who by a
single word cured me of an infirmity of which I
have suffered for thirty-eight years. He must
needs be a Teacher come from God ; for no man
can do such miracles except God be with him * !

Then asked they him, What man is that 12
which said unto thee, Take up thy bed, and
walk ?

These hypocrites do not ask, *What man is that
which made thee whole?* but name, instead, the
pretended *offence* of the Holy One.

- 13 And he that was healed wist not who it was : for JESUS had conveyed Himself away, a multitude being in *that* place.

The expression in the original is remarkable. It denotes a swift and silent gliding (literally *swimming*) out of, and away from the crowd.

- 14 Afterward JESUS findeth him in the Temple,

The Impotent man is found next *in the Temple*. Doubt not but what he hastened thither to pour out his heart in gratitude to the Author and Giver of all good things^h ! The character of those whom our SAVIOUR selected to be the objects of His Mercy, should always be carefully noticed.

and said unto him, Behold, thou art made whole : sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee.

“A worse thing,” (observes a thoughtful living writer), “than 38 years of Pain and Infirmary !— words which give us an awful glimpse of the severity of God’s judgments. This infirmity had found the man young, and left him old : it had withered up his manhood, and yet ‘a worse thing’ even than this is threatened him, should he sin again What the past Sin of this sufferer had been, to which our LORD alludes, we know not ; but the

^h See 2 Kings xx. 8.

man himself knew very well. His conscience was the interpreter of the warning."

Sometimes, therefore, bodily sickness and suffering are to be regarded as corrective of past Sin,—the direct consequence to the sinner of Sin in himself: but by no means always. It was indeed so in Gehazi's caseⁱ,—in the case of Ananias and Sapphira^k,—of Elymas^l,—and of Herod^m. Consider further 1 Corinthians xi. 30. David, however, was punished for his adulterous connexion with Bathsheba, *by the death of his child*ⁿ: and many are the cases where Sickness, Suffering, and Death itself, have been brought on the individuals of a nation by the sin of their rulers. Consider Genesis xii. 17: xx. 18. 1 Samuel v. 6 to 12. 2 Samuel xxi. 1: xxiv. 10 to 17. Then, further,—Bodily Ailment may be sent, not for the correction of past sins, but for the prevention of future,—as in the case of St. Paul^o. Lastly, its purpose may be to try and prove the patience of the Saints,—as in Job's case^p: or "that the works of God may be made manifest,"—as in the case of the Man born blind^q.

"We learn besides from our Lord's words," remarks an ancient Bishop, "that if, after undergoing a heavy punishment for our sins, we fall into them again, we shall incur another and a

ⁱ 2 Kings v. 20 to 27.

^k Acts xiii. 8 to 11.

^l 2 Sam. xii. 14.

^p Job ii. 3, &c.

^k Acts v. 1 to 10.

^m Acts xii. 23.

^o 2 Cor. xii. 7.

^q See St. John ix. 1 to 3.

heavier punishment." See the notes on St. Matthew xii. 43 to 45.

- 15 The man departed, and told the Jews that it was JESUS, which had made him whole.

Not—'which had said, *Take up thy bed* and walk;' (for *that* was an offence to the Jews, and was not the ground of the speaker's joy:) but—'which had *made him whole.*' Compare verse 12, and the note there. And here we lose sight of the man; who goes forth, preaching CHRIST!

But it is time to point out concerning the personages whom St. John in ver. 10, in this place, and in ver. 15, calls "*the Jews,*" that the Rulers of the People (as in chap. vii. 48,) are clearly spoken of: members of the Sanhedrin, or Great Council of the Nation, who were chiefly of the sect of the Pharisees. Compare ver. 33, below, with chap. i. 19, 24. Consider also the following places:—St. John vii. 1, 13: ix. 18 to 22, (and 13, 15): xviii. 12, 14. The actual power in the hands of these persons^r was what rendered their enmity so formidable: as it follows,—

- 16 And therefore did the Jews persecute JESUS, and sought to slay Him, because he had done these things on the Sabbath day
- 17 But JESUS answered them, My FATHER worketh hitherto, and I work.

That seems to mean,—Ye seek to slay Me for

^r St. Matthew xxvii. 65. St. John vii. 32, 45, &c.

having, as ye say, broken the Sabbath; whereon, according to the Commandment, men must rest,—after the pattern of God, who “*rested* on the seventh day.” But if upon acts of Mercy, Providence, and Goodness, ye bestow the name of ‘Works,’ learn ye that ‘My FATHER worketh hitherto,’—hath been ‘working’ up to this very hour,—with sleepless watchfulness, unremitting energy, untiring love. Learn that, by “rested” (in Genesis ii. 2, 3*,) it is implied only that God, at the end of six days, ceased *from the Work of Creation*,—made no more new creatures. Those were “the works” which “were *finished* from the foundation of the World.” But from that time until now, God has been carrying on *the government* of those creatures,—upholding and sustaining them. Were He to cease from *such* working, the World itself would cease to exist. Why then do ye desire to kill *Me* for displaying a similar care and concern for the Lives of men?

But by saying “*My FATHER* worketh hitherto, *and I* work,”—the Divine Speaker was declaring a glorious Doctrine. First, His own Divinity: for He calls God, His ‘FATHER,’—evidently in a different sense from that in which men, addressing the same Almighty Being, are taught to say “*Our Father*.” Consider St. Matthew vi. 9, in connexion with Isaiah lxiii. 16. “*My*,” implies *equality*. Consider St. John x. 30, 33, 36.—Next, our LORD conveys the Doctrine that He is Him-

* Compare Exodus xxxi. 17.

† Hebrews iv. 3.

self "of one substance with the FATHER,"—"in the FATHER," as the FATHER is in Him: so that as "the FATHER worketh hitherto," *He* also "worketh." Consider Hebrews i. 3. And thus it was that the Jews understood His words,—nor did He deny the correctness of their inference:—

- 18 Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill Him, because He not only had broken the Sabbath, but said also that God was His FATHER, making Himself equal with God.

Strange, that these impious men should have seen so clearly in our LORD's Words,—(namely, in the statement "that God was *His own FATHER*,")—the great Truth which many an Unbeliever of the present day declares that he cannot find there!

If the Reader will call to mind what was said in the second note on verse 15, above, and then observe the exceeding solemnity of the words which follow,—(than which anything graver, grander, and more momentous is not to be found in the whole of the Gospel,—) he will probably be of opinion that from verse 17 to the end of the present chapter is to be regarded as the Defence of the SAVIOUR of the World when cited before the Bar of His Enemies: a formal Address which He delivered before the Court of Sanhedrin.

^a Compare Romans viii. 32,—where JESUS CHRIST is called GOD's "*own SON*."

Then answered JESUS and said unto them, 19
Verily, verily, I say unto you, The SON can
do nothing of Himself, but what He seeth
the FATHER do: for what things soever He
doeth, these also doeth the SON likewise.
For the FATHER loveth the SON, and shew- 20
eth Him all things that Himself doeth :

Compare this, with what is said in ver. 30 :—
“I can of Mine own self do nothing: as I hear, I
judge.” The terms ‘hearing’ and ‘seeing,’ when
applied to God*,—as in chap. iii. 11 and 32,—
should create no surprise. In no better way can
Heavenly mysteries be revealed to Human hearts
and minds than by using such ordinary forms of
human speech. God speaks to us in the Bible,
as we speak to little children. We tell them *the
Truth*; but we put the Truth into language which
they can understand. When full-grown, they do
not reproach us with having deceived them. Far
from it. They, in turn, use the self-same language
to the Children of the next generation.

Now, it may be convenient, before we pass on
from verses 19 and 20, to bring under one point of
view some other similar places of St. John's Gos-
pel; and to offer a few remarks upon them all to-
gether, instead of dividing our remarks, or repeat-
ing them. Thus then, in St. John viii. 26 to 28,
it is said,—“He that sent Me is true; and I speak
to the World those things which I have heard of

* Consider the following places:—Genesis i. 4, 10, 12, &c.:
xi. 5: xviii. 21: xxi. 17. Exodus iii. 7.

Him. (They understood not that He spake unto them of the FATHER.) Then said JESUS I do nothing of Myself; but as My FATHER hath taught Me, I speak these things." Again, in St. John xii. 49, 50 :—"I have not spoken of Myself; but the FATHER which sent Me, He gave Me a Commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak Whatsoever I speak therefore, even as the FATHER said unto Me, so I speak." Again, in St. John xiv. 10 :—"Believest thou not that I am in the FATHER, and the FATHER in Me? The words that I speak unto you, I speak not of Myself: but the FATHER that dwelleth in Me, He doeth the works*."—In all these places a high and heavenly Doctrine is set before us: concerning which our words should be wary and few.

There are certain great Truths—held by all men, held at all times, held in all places,—fundamental Truths concerning the Three PERSONS in the Godhead,—(the mystery of the Blessed Trinity, as it is called,)—Truths *above* Reason yet not *against* Reason, which have been certainly gathered by the Church out of God's Word; and which enable it to explain other places in Holy Writ which would else have been hopelessly dark and difficult. Thus, the Doctrine of the Eternal Generation of the Son, rightly stated, will be found to bring all the texts above quoted within the limits of Man's understanding.

For the Church teaches, and hath ever taught,

* St. John iii. 34 may be also referred to; where a similar statement concerning our SAVIOUR is made by His Forerunner.

that the Divine Essence of GOD THE SON, He hath not of Himself, but by communication from GOD THE FATHER: yet is this statement, and others like it, made without reference to *Time*. We cannot talk of 'One Person of Himself originally subsisting', without straightway inquiring,—Was there ever a time when the other two Persons in the Godhead did not exist? To which the Church answers, 'In this Trinity, *none is afore or after other*;' 'The FATHER, eternal: the SON, eternal: and the HOLY GHOST, eternal'. There never was *a time*, therefore, when any One of the Three Persons was not; and yet the SON was 'begotten' of the FATHER: the HOLY GHOST 'proceeded' from the FATHER and the SON.

"All things that the FATHER hath are Mine," saith CHRIST^a; because in Him is the fulness of the same Godhead; and more than that, the FATHER cannot have. But yet, in that perfect and absolute equality, there is notwithstanding this disparity,—that the FATHER hath the Godhead not from the SON, nor any other; whereas the SON hath it from the FATHER. CHRIST is the True God, and Eternal Life; but that He is so, is from the FATHER: "for as the FATHER hath Life in Himself, so hath He *given* to the SON to have Life in Himself^b;" not by participation, but

^a These words, and many others in the present note, are borrowed from the great Work of the learned and wise Bishop Pearson.

^b See the Athanasian Creed,—the great Treasury of Catholic Truth.

^a St. John xvi. 15.

^b St. John v. 26.

by communication. It is true, our SAVIOUR was so "in the form of God," that He "thought it not robbery to be equal with God:" but when the Jews sought to kill Him, because He made Himself equal with God, He answered them,—“Verily, verily, I say unto you, the SON can do nothing of Himself but what He seeth the FATHER do.” by that connexion of His Operations, shewing the reception of His Essence; and by the acknowledgment of His Power, professing His Substance from the FATHER.

When, therefore, our LORD says, (in verse 80.) “I can of Mine own self do nothing,”—it is, because He is not of Himself; and whosoever receives His Being, must receive His Power from another; especially where the Essence and the Power are undeniably the same, as in God they are. “The SON” then, “can do nothing of Himself, but what He seeth the FATHER do,”—because He hath no Power of Himself but what the FATHER gave: and since the FATHER gave Him all the Power, as communicating His entire and undivided Essence, therefore “what things soever He doeth, these also doeth the SON likewise,”—by the same Power by which the SON worketh; because He had received the same Godhead in which the FATHER subsisteth.

The Reader is also referred to the note on St. John xiv. 28, for some remarks on this great subject.—Speaking of what things the FATHER sheweth the SON, our LORD proceeds:

and He will shew Him greater works than these, that ye may marvel. For as the 21 FATHER raiseth up the Dead, and quickeneth *them*; even so the SON quickeneth whom He will.

To raise the dead would be a more marvellous work than that performed upon the Impotent Man. But our LORD's language seems to be intentionally made capable of a double interpretation; being applicable either to the quickening of those who are "dead in trespasses and sins^d," or to the Raising of the Dead at the last day: to which, allusion is made in chap. vi. 89, 40, 44, 54. And this may have been done, because while the relief of bodily suffering was the actual subject of our LORD's Discourse,—Sin and Eternal Death, (of which Sickness^e and Dissolution are but the emblems,) were in reality the objects at which His gracious words pointed.

All this is made plainer in the sequel: for, while verses 24, 25, and 26, declare the spiritual Resurrection which takes place in Time,—verses 28 and 29 will be found to set forth the bodily Resurrection which is for Eternity. Verse 27 may be compared with ver. 22.

"*Whom He will*:"—that is the Prerogative of God alone. Of GOD the FATHER,—as in St. James i. 18: of GOD the SON,—as in St. Matthew viii. 3, and in this place: of GOD the HOLY

^d Ephesians ii. 1.

^e See above, verse 14.

GHOST,—as in 1 Corinthians xii. 11.—God, and God only, may do *as He will*. Yet is it certain that the Will of God is not arbitrary : for, (as the Apostle declares,) He worketh all things “after *the counsel* of His own Will^t ;” “and whatsoever is done with counsel or wise resolution, hath of necessity some reason why it should be done.”

22 For the FATHER

—who never took upon Him the nature of men or of angels,—

judgeth no man, but hath committed all Judgment unto the SON :

As stated in Acts xvii. 31 and x. 42. And the reason why He hath committed it to Him, is because He is not only the SON of GOD, (as verses 22 and 23 imply, and verse 25 clearly states,) and so, truly GOD ;—but also “the SON of Man,” (as stated in verse 27,) and so truly Man : *that* SON of Man who suffered so much for the sons of men.

There is therefore an original, supreme, judicial power : and there is a judicial power derived, given by commission. CHRIST, as GOD, hath the first, together with the FATHER : CHRIST, as Man, hath the second from the FATHER. And the reason of this delegated authority is set forth in the next verse :—

23 that all *men* should honour the SON, even as they honour the FATHER. He that

^t Ephes. i. 11.

honoureth not the SON honoureth not the FATHER, which hath sent Him.

For the SON could not be the SON, but for the FATHER: nor could He be the FATHER if He had not the SON.

Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth My Word, and believeth on Him that sent Me,

Our LORD says not "on *Me*;" but "on *Him that sent Me*:" and the reason is plain. He is "*declaring the FATHER*:" is engaged in revealing to the Jews the mysterious relation in which Himself, (the SON,) stood to the FATHER. It will suffice, therefore, if He can persuade them to "believe on *Him that sent*:" for if "every one that loveth Him that begat, loveth Him also that is Begotten of Him^h," certainly *Belief* on Him that *sent* will produce Belief also in Him that *is sent*. See above (verse 23,) how the honour of the FATHER and of the SON are declared, mutually, one to imply the other. Consider St. John xii. 44: xv. 23.—He then, so hearing and believing,

hath Everlasting Life, and shall not come into Condemnation; but is passed from Death unto Life.

"To hear," in the language of the SPIRIT, is "*to obey*." "He that heareth My Word," is there-

^s St. John i. 18.

^h 1 St. John v. 1.

fore, "He that keepeth My commandments." See the note on ver. 29. Of such an one it is said,—he "*hath* Everlasting Life:" he "*passed* from Death unto Life." That is, he has begun *already* to be a partaker of it. The Eternal Life which he obtains here, is as it were an earnest of that which is to follow. Remember what is said in St. John xi. 25, 26: and take notice how exactly it corresponds with what is here declared of a passage, in *this* World, "from Death unto Life." Consider St. John vi. 47, and the note

- 25 Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the Dead shall hear the Voice of the SON of GOD: and they that hear shall live.

"Hear,"—so as *to obey*: as explained in the preceding note. Spiritual deadness, obviously, is here spoken of. A state of *Sin* is set forth under the image of *Death*, as in so many other places¹; while *Repentance* is spoken of as *Life* itself. Compare St. Luke xv. 24, 32. Also Ephes. ii. 1, 5: v. 14. Coloss. ii. 13. 1 St. John iii. 14. And see the note on St. Matthew ix. 25.

- 26 For as the FATHER hath Life in Himself; so hath He given to the SON to have Life in Himself.

The *likeness of Nature* between the First and Second Persons of the Blessed Trinity is here de-

¹ See St. Matthew viii. 22, and the note there.

clared. Both the FATHER and the SON have the same life; both have it in themselves; both, in the same degree; *as* the One, *so* the Other: but only with this difference,—the FATHER (from all Eternity) giveth it; the SON (from all Eternity) receiveth it. And this has been already explained in the note on ver. 20. From whence, in a certain place, CHRIST professeth that ‘the living FATHER sent Him, and that *He liveth by the FATHER*^k;’ and here, that the FATHER ‘*gave Him to have Life in Himself*:’ which is tantamount to saying that the FATHER “begat” Him.

In Him dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead bodily^l; and this, He sufficiently shewed by His acts of Divine power: not only healing diseases, and casting out devils; stilling the winds and waves, and even raising the dead; but from Him, as from a fountain, without word or sign, Healing Virtue went into as many as touched His garments in Faith^m. More than this; He was able, at will, to impart to others a measure—as much as He would—of His own Divine Powerⁿ. So that, most truly, “*in Him was Life*.”—It follows:

And hath given Him authority to execute 27
Judgment also, because He is the Son of
Man.

^k St. John vi. 57.

^l Coloss. ii. 9.

^m St. Mark v. 28, 29. St. Luke vi. 19.

ⁿ St. Luke x. 19: St. Matth. x. 8: St. Mark xvi. 17: St. John xiv. 12.

^o St. John i. 4.

That is, because, of the three Persons which are God, He only is also the Son of Man. And therefore, because of His alliance with man's nature,—because of His sense of man's infirmities,—because of all He did and suffered for man's sake, as the Son of Man,—He is most fit, as well as most worthy, to be Man's Judge. See above, on verse 22.

Yet further,—since "Son of Man" is a title of our LORD which often stands for "The MESSIAH," (as was explained in the second note on St. Matthew viii. 20,) it seems to be here implied that the Divine Speaker must needs duly perform that part of the Mediatorial office which made Him Judge both of quick and dead.

28 **Marvel not at this :**

Referring, probably, less to what He had just before said of Judgment to come, than to the statements in verses 24 and 25 concerning spiritual Resurrection :

for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear His Voice,
29 and shall come forth ; they that have done Good, unto the Resurrection of Life ; and they that have done Evil, unto the Resurrection of Damnation.

In this way, our LORD repeatedly reasons. Consider the following places : St. John i. 50, 51 : iii. 7, 8 : vi. 61, 62. St. Mark ii. 9 to 11, &c.

These two verses, then, stand in marked contrast

with verses 24 and 25, and should be compared with them, throughout. *There*, the Resurrection which takes place in *this* World,—the Resurrection of the Soul from the Death of Sin to the Life of Righteousness was spoken of: *here*, the Resurrection of Soul and Body at the Last Day is declared. Hence, in the former place, the phrases,—“now *is*,” “the *dead*,” (whether *all* or *some* is not stated,) “shall *live*,” in the latter,—“is *coming*,” (for the Judgment is yet future;) “*all*,” (for we must *all* stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ;) “in the *Graves*,” and “shall *come forth*,” (for the Resurrection of *the Body* is intended.)

It might be thought by one who should contend for the mere letter of ver. 24, that the phrase “he that heareth My Word” should not be interpreted of *works of Obedience*. The language in that place may seem to some, little else than a declaration that “Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God^p.” Let such ‘hearers,’ however, attend to the description (in verse 29) of those who “shall come forth unto the Resurrection of Life” Eternal. It is “*they that have done good*,”—and none other.

I can of Mine Own Self do nothing: as 30
I hear, I judge:

This is said because the SON is not of Himself, but was from all Eternity begotten of the FATHER; and whosoever receives his Being, must receive

his Power, from another: especially where the Essence and the Power are the same, as in God they are.—The Reader is referred to verse 19, and the note there. See also the note on the last words of St. John xiv. 28, for a few more words on this great mystery.—‘As I hear, I judge:’

and My Judgment is just; because I seek not Mine own Will, but the Will of the FATHER which hath sent Me.

The reader is referred below, to the notes on ver. 44; and will observe that our LORD pronounces here, ‘in reference to His own conduct and example, that Humility, Submission, and entire Singleness of purpose,—founded upon implicit Obedience to GOD,—are the true rudder to guide us to Truth in reasoning.’

Not that the Will of God the SON is here spoken of as something distinct from the Will of God the FATHER; for *that* were absurd: but, *as the Son of Man*, our Blessed SAVIOUR had a Human Will,—distinct from the Divine; though never at variance with it. Consider by all means the memorable words in St. Luke xxii. 42. In this place, then, our LORD declares, that His Will is not His own in such a sense, as to be different from the FATHER’S: that, as Man, He seeks not His own Will in opposition to that of God. “For” (says a great African Bishop) “men do their own Will, not God’s, when, to please themselves, they violate God’s commands. But when

they do what they wish, so as at the same time to follow the Will of God, they do not their own Will, but God's."—Compare St. John vi. 38.

See some remarks in the notes on St. Matthew ix. 13, on the expression "*not* Mine own . . . *but*;" and compare in the present Gospel, iii. 17: vi. 27: vii. 16: ix. 3: xii. 44, 47: xiv. 24.

If I bear witness of Myself, My witness is 31 not true. There is Another that beareth 32 witness of Me; and I know that the witness which He witnesseth of Me is true.

Our LORD means, that they would not allow Him to bear witness of Himself; that they would pronounce such witness untrue,—as they actually did, in chap. viii. 13. And further, that His witness as Man, without the witness of another,^a—without the witness of God,—was inconclusive. (Consider Acts ii. 22, and Hebrews ii. 4. See also verse 36, below; and the note there.) He proceeds therefore to remind them that He had, besides, a fourfold witness;—(I.) the witness of St. John Baptist,—(II.) the witness of His own miraculous works, (ver. 36,)—(III.) the witness of the FATHER, (ver. 37,)—and (IV.) the witness of Holy Scripture, (ver. 39, &c.) . . . First, He reminds them of the Baptist's Testimony, which was the least of all; and, as if to anticipate their objection that it might not be *true*, He adds:

^a St. Matt. xviii. 16. * See the heading of the present chapter.

33 Ye sent unto John, and he bare wi
 34 unto the Truth. But I receive not testi
 from man : but these things I say, th
 might be saved.

That is,—Ye sought him yourselves, to i
 of him ; (alluding to chap. i. 19 to 27 :) I
 why I use his testimony,—that ye might be
 For I, being God, need not the Testimony of

35 He was a burning and a shining
 and ye were willing for a season to r
 in his light.

Rather,—“ He was the burning and s
 Lamp.” The reader is referred to the no
 St. John i. 23.

36 But I have greater witness than t
 John : for the works which the FATHER
 given Me to finish, the same works
 do, bear witness of Me, that the F.
 hath sent Me.

Our LORD says that His Miracles no
 proved Him to be *GOD*, but proved Him
 the *MESSIAH* likewise,—by correspondin
 the predictions of Prophecy : Isaiah xx:
 xxxii. 3, 4 : xxxv. 5, 6 : xlii. 6, 7, &c. He
 thus appealed to the witness of His Mirac
 in St. Luke vii. 20 to 22. St. John x. 2
 xiv. 10, 11 : xv. 24, &c.

And the FATHER Himself, which hath 37
sent Me, hath borne witness of Me. Ye
have neither heard His Voice at any time,
nor seen His shape. And ye have not His 38
Word abiding in you: for whom He hath
sent, Him ye believe not.

"God is a *Spirit*;" "without Body, parts, or
passions^t." He hath no voice, therefore,—neither
hath He a shape. And this is what our LORD
here declares. Consider Exodus xxxiii. 20: Deut.
* iv. 12: 1 Tim. vi. 16: 1 St. John iv. 12. But the
Voice from Heaven which attended the Baptism
of our SAVIOUR, and proclaimed Him as the "Be-
loved SON," was doubtless *part* of the "witness"
borne to Him by the FATHER^u.

In this place, however, our LORD certainly does
not refer in any *special* manner to that remarkable
Testimony. Rather may it be thought that He
even draws away the attention *from* it. The FATHER,
by giving to the Jews His Word, (that is, *the*
Gospel ^s), through the SON, had thereby 'borne
witness' to Him. But their actions proved that
they had not *that* Word abiding in themselves^v;
—namely, the Commandments of God, in the

^u St. John iv. 24.

^t Article i.

^s See St. Matth. iii. 17, and St. Luke iii. 22,—where, (in the
words of the heading of the Chapter,) 'CHRIST receiveth testimony
from Heaven.' See also St. Matthew xvii. 5: but observe, the
Transfiguration was an event yet future.

^x Compare St. John vii. 16. viii. 28: xii. 49: xiv. 10, 24.

^v Compare 1 St. John ii. 14.

true spirit of them: for (He adds,) "Whom He hath sent, Him ye believe not." Now, as our LORD declared on another occasion,—“If any man will *do His Will*, He shall know of the Doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of Myself*.”

- 39 Search the Scriptures; for in them ye think ye have Eternal Life: and they are they which testify of Me.

“Of Me,—through whom alone that Life may be obtained.”

- 40 And ye will not come to Me, that ye might have Life.

Perhaps this ought to be read,—‘Ye search the Scriptures.’ The meaning is, that though the Scriptures bore such clear Testimony to CHRIST, *yet* the Jewish nation, to whom those Books belonged^a, would not come to CHRIST.

It was said, above, (in the note on verse 32,) that our LORD appealed to a fourfold Testimony. It should be observed that a gradation, as well as a connexion, is discernible between every link in the chain.—Ye chose the witness of John (I.): but the witness of My Miracles is far greater; for those works are the confirmation of his words (II.). Still weightier witness do My Doctrines supply, that I came forth from God, and am the MESSIAH (III.). But the most mighty Testimony of

* St. John vii. 17.

* Romans iii. 2.

any is supplied by the writings of Moses,—by the whole volume of Scripture ; which, in Types and Shadows,—Histories and Laws,—Civil and Religious Enactments,—Feasts and Sacrifices,—Prophecies and Psalms,—is *full*, full from end to end, *of Me* (IV.).

It seems as if it were further implied,—I do not bring forward this fourfold Testimony because I seek My own Glory^b. “I complain not of your being unwilling to come to Me, as though I should gain honour from your coming ; for,”—

I receive not honour from men. But 41

“I speak thus of you, because”

I know you, that ye have not the Love of 42
God in you.

To convince you that it is not from your love of God that you persecute Me ; for He bears witness to Me, as I have shewn, by My Doctrine, by My Works, and by the Scriptures.

I am come in My FATHER'S Name, and 43
ye receive Me not : if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive.

Alluding to the “false Christs and false Prophets” which our LORD foretold : St. Matth. xxiv. 24. “Here then,” observes an old Eastern Bishop, “is the crowning proof of their impiety. He says, —If it was the Love of God which made you per-

^b Compare St. John vii. 18 : viii. 50, 54.

secute Me, you would persecute Antichrist, (who will come in his own name,) much more: for he will not profess to be sent by the FATHER, or to come according to His Will; but, on the contrary, usurping what does not belong to him, will proclaim himself to be God over all." Wherefore, Antichrist ye *will* receive.

'The true disciples of our LORD were few; though in one instance four, and in another five thousand were miraculously fed by Him. But a Jew who afterwards came from Egypt with no other credentials but self-confident boasting, led away to Olivet, as Josephus informs us, no less a number than 30,000 deluded followers. And though, as far as appears, neither he nor any of his brethren in imposture actually assumed the title of MESSIAH, yet their general conduct shewed to what their ambitious views aspired.'

- 44 How can ye believe, which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that *cometh* from God only?

Mark the contrast between the disposition implied by these words, and what our LORD states concerning Himself in ver. 41.

This is one of those marvellous places, (places which are scattered with no sparing hand throughout the Book of Life,) in which a secret is revealed to us concerning ourselves. It is found that the disposition which courts honour at the hands of men, and is content to rest in such honour, is at

enmity with the spirit of Faith. Compare chapter xii. 42, 43. St. Matthew xxiii. 5. Rom. ii. 29. —There is, indeed, ‘scarcely any doctrine or precept of our SAVIOUR more distinctly and strongly stated, than that the capacity for judging of, and for believing the Truths of Christianity, depends upon moral Goodness, and the practice of Virtue.’ The reader will do well to consider the texts indicated at foot^c.

Do not think that I will accuse you to the ⁴⁵ FATHER : there is *one* that accuseth you, *even* Moses, in whom ye trust.

He answers them out of their own authorities : John,—to whom *they sent* ; the Scriptures,—wherein *they thought they had eternal Life* ; Moses,—in whom *they trusted*. And He warns them that their trust in Moses is based on a foundation of sand : that the great Lawgiver himself will prove the accuser of the nation,—nay, is their accuser already. And the memorable reason follows :

For had ye believed Moses, ye would have ⁴⁶ believed Me ; for he wrote of Me.

A wondrous declaration, truly, if we consider who is the Speaker¹. O to have known what He said on this subject to Cleopas and his companion as they went to Emmaus ! But the Books of

^c St. John vii. 17 : viii. 12. Eccclus. i. 26 : xxi. 11. St. Matth. v. 8. Psalm xix. 8 : cxix. 100. And see above, the first note on the latter half of ver. 30 ; and the note on St. Luke xi. 33, and 43.

^d Compare St. John i. 45. St. Luke xxiv. 27. Acts xxviii. 23.

Moses are in our hands. *Where* then does he write of CHRIST? Shall it suffice to appeal to ten or twenty places in the Pentateuch,—such as the reader will find enumerated at foot of the page? Surely, those places do not come up to the largeness of our LORD's statement! Where does Moses say 'that CHRIST should suffer?'—or 'that He should be the first that should rise from the dead?'—or that He 'should shew Light unto the people, and to the Gentiles?' And yet, St. Paul found some, if not all, of these things in 'Moses!'^{*} The plain truth is that *we do not thoroughly understand the Bible*; and the next best thing to understanding it, is to know that we understand it not.

47 But if ye believe not his Writings, how shall ye believe My Words?

That is,—If ye practically disbelieve the ancient Writings of one whom ye profess to hold in such honour, how should ye believe the mere Sayings of One for whom ye entertain no respect?

With such words does our SAVIOUR conclude a discourse which yields to none in Holy Scripture, in dignity, difficulty, and mysterious importance. In declaring the eternal relations of the FATHER and of the SON, this chapter may be regarded as a very 'pillar and ground of the Truth.'

^{*} Gen. iii. 15: xii. 3: xviii. 18: xxvi. 4: xlix. 10. Num. xxi. 9. Deut. xviii. 15, 18.

[†] See above, the note on ver. 40. [‡] See Acts xxvi. 22, 23.

PLAIN COMMENTARY

ON THE SIXTH CHAPTER OF

St. John's Gospel.

1 CHRIST feedeth five thousand men with five loaves and two fishes.
 15 Thereupon the people would have made Him King. 16 But withdrawing Himself, He walked on the sea to His Disciples:
 26 reproveth the people flocking after Him, and all the fleshly hearers of His Word: 82 declareth Himself to be the Bread of Life to believers. 66 Many Disciples depart from Him. 68 Peter confesseth Him. 70 Judas is a devil.

THE Evangelist St. John does not record the Institution of either of the two Sacraments. But what the other Evangelists have set down in the way of historical narrative, St. John is found to deliver in the way of doctrinal statement. Accordingly, our LORD's Discourse with Nicodemus, in the third chapter of St. John's Gospel, is allowed by the Universal Church to relate to Holy Baptism: while the Discourse in the Synagogue of Capernaum, in the present chapter, as plainly relates to the great mystery of the Holy Eucharist*. A singular coincidence is moreover observable in the manner and arrangement which runs through the chapters in which these two Sacraments are predicted; as will be found pointed out below in the notes on verses 52 and 62.

* See below, the note on ver. 35.

In the Miraculous feeding of the Five thousand, which precedes the Discourse in the Synagogue of Capernaum, our LORD mystical and symbolically sets forth the virtue of His own Incarnation and the Eucharist as connected with it, in a manner that affords no fitter preparation for that Discourse could be imagined, than is here supplied : it may be declared briefly, that the Incarnation and the Eucharist as connected with it, is the pervading topic of the whole chapter.

VI. AFTER these things JESUS went down from the sea of Galilee, which is *the sea of Tiberias*.

Between chapter v. and chapter vi., a year elapses,—the second year of our LORD'S Ministry. St. John, because he wrote his Gospel at a distance from the Holy Land, and addressed it to a people unacquainted with the language, religion, the customs or geography of Judea, was found frequently to explain his own statements and the terms which he himself employs. In the first chapter of his Gospel, we find an explanation of the words 'Rabbi,' 'Cephas^b.' Below, in ver. 4, he informs the reader that 'the Passover' is '*a Feast of the Jews*' and towards the close of his Gospel, he explains what is 'the manner of the Jews to bury the dead.' In the fourth chapter, he explains that one going out of Judæa into Galilee, 'must first come to Jerusalem.'

^b St. John i. 38, 41, 42.

^c St. John i.

through Samaria^d ;' and, in the verse before us, he identifies the mountain Lake, known in Palestine as 'the Sea of Galilee,' by mentioning the most considerable city which stood upon its shore. Tiberias, situated on the western side of the Lake, was built by Herod Antipas, and named after the Roman Emperor Tiberius.

And a great multitude followed Him, because they saw His miracles which He did on them that were diseased. And JESUS went up into a mountain, and there He sat with His Disciples.

At all to understand the history of the transaction thus alluded to, rather than described,—(the reason, namely, why our LORD 'went over the Sea of Galilee,' and the manner of the pursuit adopted by the 'great multitude,')—the reader should consult the narratives of the three earlier Evangelists*. He will be disposed to remark, when he has done so, that this part of St. John's Gospel does not by any means produce a corresponding impression on the mind. To which it may be answered, that *neither was it intended* that it should. St. John passes very briefly over the previous history, (which had been so fully treated by the Evangelists who wrote before him;) being chiefly anxious to describe the miraculous feeding

^d St. John iv. 4.

* St. Matthew xiv. 13 to 14: St. Mark vi. 32 to 34: St. Luke ix. 10 and 11.

of the Five Thousand which followed, and above all to record the Divine Discourse of our SAVIOUR, to which none of the other Evangelists had been guided even to make allusion. Take notice of his remarkable method, as exemplified in the very next verse:—

- 4 And the Passover, a feast of the Jews, was nigh.

The reader may be invited, in passing, to compare this explanation of the term 'Passover' with what is found in St. John ii. 13, and xi. 55. See above, the note on verse 1; and the note on the latter part of chap. ii. 6.

But it is far more important that he should consider what may have been the object of the blessed Writer in introducing here the statement that the Passover was nigh. Was it done *merely* to mark the close of the second year of our SAVIOUR'S Ministry? We cannot believe it. Much worthier seems the supposition that the HOLY SPIRIT thereby guides Believers to connect the miracle which follows, with the Paschal season: to view therein a lively symbol of the Efficacy of the Sacrifice of 'CHRIST, our Passover^f;' and thus to regard the entire transaction as having mysterious reference to the great event which took place at Jerusalem exactly one year after the date of the present transaction. For, as the HOLY ONE Himself declared on this occasion,—'I am the Bread

^f 1 Cor. v. 7.

of Life,'—'the living Bread, which came down from heaven:' 'and the Bread which I will give is *My flesh*, which *I will give for the life of the World.*' 'Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat *the flesh of the Son of Man*, and drink *His blood*, ye have no life in you^g !'

That these words have reference to the blessed Sacrament of CHRIST'S Body and Blood, the Church allows^h: and indeed can we doubt that *both* miracles of feeding,—*this*, performed for the relief of the Five Thousand, and *that* for the relief of the Fourⁱ,—were emblematic of the same Heavenly Feast, which was expressly ordained for the support of souls fainting in this World's wilderness?

But our attention is invited to the mountain's side, on the north-eastern extremity of the Lake, where our SAVIOUR has withdrawn with His Twelve Apostles.

When JESUS then lifted up *His* eyes, and ⁵ saw a great company come unto Him, He saith unto Philip, Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat? And this He ⁶ said to prove him:

But *why* did He address this inquiry to Philip? The Evangelist himself supplies the reason: 'this He said to prove him,' that is, to make trial of

^g See below, verses 35, 41, 51, 53.

^h "For then we spiritually eat the Flesh of CHRIST, and drink His Blood." (From the Exhortation in the Communion Service.)

ⁱ See St. Matthew xv. 32, and the note there.

the Apostle's Faith. Was then CHRIST ignorant of what would be St. Philip's reply? GOD forbid that such a thought concerning the Searcher of hearts should be seriously entertained! Effectually to preclude it, the Evangelist adds,—

for He Himself knew what He would do.

'He only intended to draw forth by His question the mind of that Apostle and the rest, who had besought Him to send away the multitude to buy food for themselves in the nearest villages^k. All were to be made fully aware of the insufficiency of their own resources for such a multitude; and to feel that a power no less than Divine was concerned in supplying the deficiency^l.'

But the question recurs, Why was *Philip* singled out for the inquiry recorded in the text? The clue is probably to be found in our SAVIOUR's dialogue with him recorded in the xivth chapter of the present Gospel^m. A certain slowness of heart to recognise the Godhead of the Incarnate SON, may be presumed thus on *two* recorded occasions to have suggested words, the tendency of which was to reveal St. Philip to himself.—His reply sufficiently shews that he dreamed of nothing less than a display of miraculous power.

7 Philip answered Him, Two hundred penny-

^k See St. Matth. xiv. 15: St. Mark vi. 36: St. Luke ix. 12.

^l Dr. W. H. Mill.

^m St. John xiv. 7 to 11.

worth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one of them may take a little.

And yet, this was the same Philip who, in the beginning of the Gospel, 'findeth Nathanael, and saith unto him, We have found Him of whom Moses in the Law, and the Prophets, did write'.^a Strange, that one who was prepared to make such a confession, should have been unprepared for the inferences which, to *us*, seem so unavoidable! Instead of replying,—'The eyes of all wait upon Thee, O LORD; and Thou givest them their meat in due season. Thou openest Thy hand, and fillest all things living with plenteousness.'^b—we find him adverting only to the slender store of money contained in their common purse,—which may have amounted in value to about 7*l.* or 8*l.* sterling.

One of His disciples, Andrew, Simon^c Peter's brother, saith unto Him, There is a lad here, which hath five barley loaves, and two small fishes :

On which, one of the ancients suggests beautifully,—'Probably he had some reason in his mind for this speech. He would know of Elijah's miracle, by which *a hundred* men were fed with *twenty* barley loaves'. This was a great step, but here he stopped. He did not rise any higher: for his next words are,—

^a St. John i. 45.

^b Psalm cxlv. 15, 16.

^c 2 Kings iv. 42 to 44.

but what are they among so many?

It might be said that less could produce less
 without, and more more: a great mistake;
 since it was as easy for CHRIST to feed
 thousands with a few fishes, as from many.
 If we could want any material to work fi-
 nish, we could use a created thing for this
 purpose, but it show that no part of the C
 was derived from His wisdom. See the
 words of the text.

And when these leaves, thus the you
 of the world, in the Gospel,—becoming
 the first of the disciples, of God's Mercies
 to the world, and some beautiful verses on the
 subject of the "Independence" beginning:

And when the Son of God spread His feast
 For thousands on the mountain's side,
 One to the east and east
 The abundant store supplied.

And when the Son of God spread His feast
 Now there was much ~~store~~ in the place
 The men sat down, in number about
 thousands.

This was the number of
 the women and child-
 for more than two
 will therefore

ON ST. JOHN'S GOSPEL.

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iv. 32. St. Luke xxii. 19.

Luke ix. 16.

but what are they among so many ?

‘He thought that less could produce less in a miracle, and more more: a great mistake; inasmuch as it was as easy for CHRIST to feed the multitude from a few fishes, as from many. He did not really want any material to work from; but only made use of created things for this purpose, in order to shew that no part of the Creation was severed from His wisdom.’ See the note on St. Matthew xiv. 17.

‘*A lad*’ carried these loaves; thus the young obtain an interest in the Gospel,—becoming the objects, or the instruments, of God’s Mercies in CHRIST. There are some beautiful verses on this subject in the ‘*Lyra Innocentium*,’ beginning;—

What time the SAVIOUR spread His feast
For thousands on the mountain’s side,
One of the last and least
The abundant store supplied.

- 10 And JESUS said, Make the men sit down.
Now there was much grass in the place. So
the men sat down, in number about five
thousand.

This was the number of ‘*the men*.’ Including the women and children*, there must have been far more than twice five thousand. Each Apostle will therefore have had about as many to minister

* St. Matthew xiv. 21.

unto, as experience shews may not unreasonably be left to the pastoral care of a single individual. St. Mark relates that the vast assembly was further subdivided into companies of fifty and a hundred.

‘There was much grass in the place,’—and the grass was ‘green’; for it was the month of March or April, as we learn from what was stated in the 4th verse.—As, in all the accounts of the Institution of the Holy Eucharist, it is expressly mentioned that, in the first instance, our SAVIOUR ‘took bread’;—so, in all the four accounts of the present miracle, does the same act find special record likewise^u. As it follows :

And JESUS took the loaves ; and when He ¹¹ had given thanks, He distributed to the Disciples, and the Disciples to them that were set down ; and likewise of the fishes as much as they would.

‘The distribution is preceded by a solemn giving of thanks ; which, emphatically repeated both in the narrative itself, and the subsequent allusion in the 23rd verse, shews that the eucharistic act was an essential part of the mystery^x.’

By thus giving thanks, CHRIST further teaches us what should be *our* habit whenever we sit down

^u St. Mark vi. 39.

^v St. Matth. xxvi. 26. St. Mark xiv. 22. St. Luke xxii. 19.

^w See the end of the note on St. Luke ix. 16.

^x Dr. W. H. Mill.

to meat.—By His distribution '*to the Disc*
He shews that the Bishops and Pastors of I
are the appointed channels for the convey
His gifts. Both which circumstances will be
already remarked upon in the notes on St. I
Gospel,—chap. vi. 41.—The marvellous in
of food which followed, has been the subj
some observations in the notes on St. Matthew
19, 20; and St. Luke ix. 16. It was achieve
the same creative power which produces a har
out of a few grains: for those five loaves wert
seeds in CHRIST'S Hands,—seeds which yielded
the Great Husbandman *a thousand-fold*.

How marvellous must have been that growth,
so rapid and so abundant, yet eluding observatio
and defying understanding! The bread is broken
yet not diminished: each loaf is divided into parts
yet the sum of the parts is found to be greater
than the whole: half is given away, yet all re
mains! Above all, there remained at last
far larger supply than existed at the beginning
And thus the saying of the wise man came lite
rally true,—'*There is that scattereth, and yet is
creaseth*.'

- 12 When they were filled, He said unto Hi
Disciples, Gather up the fragments that re
main, that nothing be lost.

These memorable words are peculiar to the pr
sent Gospel. A most precious injunction this wi

' Proverbs xi. 24.

be felt evermore to be; and a mighty warrant, even amid the greatest abundance, that no *Waste* should be allowed. The reason of this, in such as we are, is indeed plain enough; for every thing we call our own, is in reality 'another man's'.^a We are not Lords and Masters of any thing. We are but Stewards and Servants; and of this, the Gospel often reminds us. But even the LORD of the whole Earth,—at whose will a table was furnished in the wilderness, and bread provided for His people^a,—even *He*, the LORD and Master of all, bade gather up the fragments, and was solicitous that *nothing* should be *lost*!

Other inferences besides this, have been drawn from our LORD's injunction; some of which are indeed sufficiently obvious. Who does not feel, however, that there must be a yet deeper meaning here than meets the eye?

The Evangelist proceeds to record the necessary result of the injunction before us,—which was delivered to *Twelve* men:—

Therefore they gathered *them* together, 13 and filled twelve baskets with the fragments of the five barley loaves, which remained over and above unto them that had eaten.

It cannot be without an object that St. John has twice reminded us that these were '*barley* loaves.' What may that object, therefore, be presumed to be? And why do all the Evangelists so

^a St. Luke xvi. 12.

^a Psalm lxxviii. 19, 20.

often state that the loaves were *five* in number? Are we simply to see in the material of the loaves an indication of *the season* of the year^b: in their number, a careful distinction of the present miracle from that other occasion when *seven* loaves furnished forth a banquet for four thousand^c?

The perfect safety of such criticism forcibly recommends it to writers and readers of every description: and very far are we from disparaging a style of remark which we believe to be in itself perfectly true, and which is doubtless highly valuable also. But the question arises,—Is it *the whole* truth? May there not have been yet another object in the writer's mind for dwelling on the fact that the present miracle was wrought with *five* loaves of *barley* bread? But we forbear to speculate. It shall suffice to have invited the reader's attention to the subject; and to have avowed our own suspicions.—The reference of the present miracle to the coming Sacrifice of CHRIST, and to the benefits consequent thereon, is however something more than a mere matter of opinion. 'Certainly,' (as one of the greatest of our Divines^d has remarked,) 'no more significant act,—none more pregnant with meaning and mystery,—appears in the whole course of CHRIST's Humiliation, than this feeding of the Five Thousand.' 'It is the only event before the Passion and the Resurrection, which is found related by *all the*

^b Compare Exodus ix. 31, and 2 Kings iv. 42.

^c St. Matth. xv. 32, &c. St. Mark viii. 1. ^d Dr. W. H. Mill.

four Evangelists. . . . Not without reason is it that the Church repeats this, as no other is found repeated, in her cycle of Gospels; giving this narrative from St. John, not only on Mid-Lent Sunday, as preparatory to the approaching Paschal Eucharist,—but again, divested of its significant preface, in the concluding Gospel of her year.* On one of the intermediate Sundays, (the Seventh Sunday after Trinity,) we are also presented with the other miraculous feeding from St. Mark,—chap. viii. 1 to 9.

‘It is not mere stupid astonishment, then, which seizes on this great multitude, such as we sometimes see to be the sole effect of our Lord’s miracles: their thoughts ascend from the gift to the Giver.’ As it follows:

Then those men when they had seen ¹⁴ the miracle that JESUS did, said, This is of a truth that Prophet that should come into the world.

The prophet, namely, *like unto Moses*, whom the same Moses had foretold that the LORD God would raise up unto the Israelites, of their brethren†: for CHRIST had now fed them, (as Moses did,) with manna in the wilderness. Consider the questions which were put to the Baptist in the early part of his Ministry‡; and take

* See the Gospel for the Fourth Sunday in Lent, (which is St. John vi. 1 to 14,) and for the Twenty-fifth Sunday after Trinity; which last begins at verse 5.

† Deut. xviii. 15, 18.

‡ St. John i. 20, 21.

notice that the multitude here spoken of, seen (from what follows,) to have identified "the Prophet," with CHRIST, the promised *King*. Accordingly, it is added,—

- 15 When JESUS therefore perceived that th
would come and take Him by force, to ma
Him a King, He departed again into a mou
tain Himself alone.

Rather,—‘ He withdrew again to the mounta
already mentioned in verse 3 ; and that, as
Matthew^h and St. Markⁱ relate, for the purp
of *prayer* : thereby teaching us, (as a great r
remarks,) that whenever escape is necessary, th
is necessity for prayer also.—‘ Dismissing His D
ciples to the Lake by themselves, and eluding t
carnal-minded multitudes, He retires for priv
prayer to the mountain ; to add one vigil m
of fasting and devotion to a life perpetually offer
up in sacrifice to His FATHER for the sin and mi
ness of mankind.’

One of the charges which the enemies of c
LORD brought against Him, at the time of H
Passion, was, that He claimed to be “CHRIST
King.”^k so that He is found, like Joseph, to ha
suffered for the very offence which He had shew
Himself most careful to avoid^l. Not but wh

^h St. Matth. xiv. 23.

ⁱ St. Mark vi. 46.

^k St. Luke xxiii. 2.

^l Consider Genesis xxxix. 8, 9, 12, and 14.

He *was* and *is* a King^m; nay more,—“KING of Kings, and LORD of Lordsⁿ.” Yet was His Kingdom “not of this World^o,” neither was He a King by the will of man; but because He reigned from all Eternity with the FATHER.

And when even was *now* come, His Disciples went down unto the sea, and entered into a ship, and went over the sea toward Capernaum.

Rather,—‘And when the Evening was come, His Disciples had gone down to the sea, and having entered the ship, were going over the sea to Capernaum.’ ‘It is easy,’ (says the great Father of the West), ‘to perceive that John relates *that* as done *afterwards* by the Disciples, which our LORD had ordered them to do before His departure to the mountain.’

And it was now dark, and JESUS was not come to them.

Darkness,—Desertion,—a Storm raging around: from such causes springs terror; whether assailing the Church of CHRIST, or any of its individual members. When, in the Baptismal Service, we speak of ‘so passing the waves of this troublesome World, that finally we may come to the Land of

^m Jeremiah xxiii. 5. Zech. ix. 9, (quoted St. Matthew xxi. 5: St. John xii. 15:) St. John i. 49: St. Luke xix. 38: St. Matth. xxvii. 11: St. John xviii. 37, &c.

ⁿ 1 Tim. vi. 15: Rev. xvii. 14: xix. 16.

^o St. John xviii. 36.

Everlasting Life,'—what do we but supply a key to the mystical interpretation of the present incident? If, in the miraculous feeding of the Five Thousand, our SAVIOUR set forth in emblem the virtue of His Incarnation and Sacrifice, — what but a type of 'the Ark of CHRIST's Church,' when deprived of its Head, did the Disciples' storm-tost bark supply?

- 18 And the sea arose by reason of a great wind that blew.

This circumstance of the Wind, (which as St. Matthew and St. Mark relate 'was contrary^p,') explains why, at the end of many hours, the Disciples had not got much more than half way across the Lake, — which is nowhere more than eight miles in breadth. As it follows:—

- 19 So when they had rowed about five and twenty or thirty furlongs, they see JESUS walking on the sea, and drawing nigh unto
20 the ship: and they were afraid. But He saith unto them, It is I; be not afraid.

Literally,—'I AM: fear not!' Thus the Greek idiom in more than one place^q, recalls the Divine Name itself^r.

- 21 Then they willingly received Him into the ship:

^p St. Matth. xiv. 24: St. Mark vi. 48.

^q So in St. John viii. 58: xviii. 5, 6, 8.

^r Exod. iii. 14.

Rather,—‘Then they wished,’ or ‘were eager to receive Him.’ St. John says nothing of St. Peter’s miraculous walking on the water, which occurred at this juncture: ‘all, events full of mystery,’—remarks a truly great writer¹.

Indeed, the entire transaction clearly bears a symbolical character,—as we have already suggested; and as was more fully pointed out in the note on St. Mark vi. 48.—How lively an image of the Church, ‘tossed with waves,’ did that Ship with its little company present; when ‘the sea arose by reason of a mighty wind that blew!’ The small progress effected, in spite of the incessant labour; and the opposition continually experienced, as well as the storm patiently sustained; are all circumstances which suggest their own obvious interpretation. CHRIST walking upon the Sea,—drawing near to the Ship,—and only then remedying the distress of its crew, when at last He blesses them with His actual presence,—completes the sacred allegory. For verily there is found to be much toil here below, without Him, and but little advance. Meantime, we know that He keepeth His Eye lovingly on His Church²; and maketh intercession for it from afar. ‘The LORD hath gone up on high,’ and ‘is mightier than the noise of many waters, yea than the mighty waves of the sea³.’ He delays His coming, indeed; and will delay it, till ‘the night is far

¹ See St. Matth. xiv. 28 to 31.

² Dr. W. H. Mill.

³ St. Mark vi. 48.

⁴ Ps. xciii. 4.

spent, and the Day is at hand :’ but then, come with power; and Rest and Joy with Him.

and immediately the Ship was at th
whither they went.

Many have thought that a quick mir
gliding of the Vessel to its destination,
spoken of. But the words in themselves
by any means, imply this. ‘Immediately’
signifies that ‘forthwith,’ ‘straightway,’ th
ciples reached ‘the haven where they woul

The Evangelist proceeds to explain wh
place on the morrow, with respect to the
tude which our SAVIOUR had left on the l
side of the Lake.

- 22 The day following, when the people
stood on the other side of the sea sa
there was none other boat there, sav
one whereinto His Disciples were en
and that JESUS went not with His Di
into the boat, but *that* His Disciples
gone away alone;

St. John was about to add, that the mul
when they saw this, (or rather, having
this over-night,) took ship and crossed over
pernaum in pursuit of our SAVIOUR. He
himself, however; for he has not yet exp
how this was possible. If ‘there was none

boat there, save that one whereinto His Disciples were entered,'—how could hundreds of persons cross the Lake in boats? He explains as follows:

(howbeit there came other boats from 23 Tiberias nigh unto the place where they did eat bread, after that the LORD had given thanks:)

That is to say,—Although, at the time when the Disciples set out for Capernaum, there was only one boat to be seen on the shore, yet did the wind of the preceding night, (which to the Disciples rowing in a westerly direction, had been contrary^a;) compel many boats from Tiberias, (on the western side of the Lake,) to put in, for security, to the eastern shore,—‘nigh unto the place where they did eat bread, *after that the LORD had given thanks.*’—Take notice, by the way, of the significant manner in which St. John speaks of the great miracle we have been considering above^a; and connect his present reference to the Eucharistic act by which it had been prefaced, with his former allusion to the Paschal Season at which it had been performed^b.—Having thus explained that, on the morrow, owing to the recent stress of weather, there was no lack of shipping on the north-eastern side of the Lake,

^a See the note and references above, on ver. 18.

^b See the first note on ver. 11, above; also the note on St. John iv. 46.

^c See above, the note on ver. 4.

where the multitude yet lingered, earnestly but vainly expecting to see our SAVIOUR re-appear among them,—St. John adds :

- 24 when the people therefore saw that JESUS was not there, neither His Disciples, they also took shipping, and came to Capernaum, seeking for JESUS.

Rather,—‘they also went on board the boats.’ That is, they persuaded their owners, on setting sail, to take them on board with them, and give them a passage to Capernaum,—the city of our LORD’s habitual residence.

- 25 And when they had found Him on the other side of the sea, they said unto Him, Rabbi, when camest Thou hither ?

They do not ask Him ‘*how*,’ but ‘*when*’ He came. There was but one boat; and the multitude had seen the Disciples depart in that boat alone^c. The Holy One therefore, (as they supposed,) must have eluded their vigilance; and in the course of the night, walked to Capernaum. Accordingly they inquire, ‘*When* camest Thou hither?’ All their thoughts about our LORD are low and grovelling. They little thought that they had to do with Him of whom it had been written,—‘Thy way is in the Sea, and Thy path in the great waters, and Thy footsteps are not known^d!’

Very instructive is it to observe how our LORD

^c See above, ver. 22.

^d Ps. lxxvii. 19.

dealt with the inquiry, — ‘Rabbi, when camest Thou hither?’

JESUS answered them and said, ‘Verily, 26 verily, I say unto you, Ye seek Me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled.

The Searcher of hearts exposes these men to themselves. ‘Verily, verily,’ He begins,—speaking from the depths of His own certain knowledge. ‘Not for *My* sake, but for *your own*, have ye followed Me. My miracle hath wrought in you no conviction,—but only a desire that the abundance of yesterday might be re-produced to-day.’

‘In the banquet of which they had been the astonished partakers,’ (says a great writer,) ‘these men saw only a foretaste of the abundance with which the anointed Son of David would enrich His followers. With no higher or purer affection than this, they looked for the expected Kingdom.’

Having therefore in this manner replied to their inquiry in ver. 25, by reproofing the low and sensual motive which had led them to follow Him to Capernaum, He indicates what had been the true import of His gracious work,—‘by exhorting them to labour for the meat which the Son of Man was able and ready to impart to the soul that hungered after Righteousness.’

Labour not for the meat which perisheth, 27

but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting Life, which the Son of Man shall give unto you :

As if He had said, — Labour, if you will, for bodily food ; such perishable bread as ye partook of yesterday : but labour rather^f for that Heavenly Bread which perisheth not, — ‘the Bread which availeth for the eternal Life of Soul as well as Body^g.’ — In which words of our LORD, the same Divine Wisdom is discoverable which we noticed in His address to the Woman of Samaria : when He had sought, (not vainly as now !), to awaken a desire for something loftier than human food^h.

Then, lest His hearers should suppose that He spoke of that which their own unassisted labour might procure, He adds that this must be *His* gift, — a gift which ‘the Son of Man’ is not only able, but also willing to impart. By which words He openly proclaims His own Godhead ; yet does He not call Himself the Son of God, in respect of this gift, but the Son of Man, — because it was not *as GOD*, but *as Man*, that He would give His Flesh for the Life of the Worldⁱ. The explanation follows :

for Him hath GOD the FATHER sealed.

That is, — For GOD the FATHER hath set His

^f See the note on St. Matth. ix. 13, and the end of note on St. John v. 30, &c.

^g Consider Isaiah lv. 2.

^h See the note on St. John iv.

ⁱ See below, ver. 51.

seal upon Him, by joining the Godhead to the Manhood in His Person.—The order of the words in the original suggests that it is further implied,—That the FATHER had thus sealed Him, in that the FATHER is God.—And thereby it is explained how the Son of Man, (being Himself Very God,) can impart to others the Bread of Eternal Life; as well as how it comes to pass that His flesh, (so conjoined with Godhead,) should actually be to others that Bread of Life.

Besides the notion of *attestation* implied by this remarkable saying, consider what is 'the nature of an impression from a signet. It exhibits accurately, as well as entirely, the character of that which impresses: and while it is altogether a recipient, in respect of the signet which produces the impression, it supplies every whit of the substance which sustains that impression!'

Then said they unto Him, What shall we do, that we might work the works of God?

'Our LORD having exhorted the people to work for that meat which endureth unto Everlasting Life,' they here (as again at the end of ver. 30) in allusion to His language, ask how they 'may work the works of God,'—that is, do the works which God requires and will accept, so as to obtain that meat. Thus in Ps. li. 17, 'the sacrifices of God,' are 'the sacrifices acceptable to God;' and in St. James i. 20, the 'Righteousness of God,

A PLAIN COMMENTARY

is the 'righteousness which God require notice that the word translated 'labor' 27, is translated 'work' in the present

- 29 JESUS answered and said unto th
is the work of God, that ye believ
whom He hath sent.

The Blessed Speaker so far condescended to their weakness, as to reply to them by using that expression. The 'work' required of 'Faith in Him whom God had sent' they were required to believe in CHRIST the SON of GOD sent for the Salvation kind.

'But when these men do indeed that it is as One sent from Heaven, an Earthly King, that He requires their and obedience, the tone of their discourse immediately altered from that of deference and veneration, to that of questioning and As it follows :

- 30 They said therefore unto Him, 'shewest Thou then, that we may believe Thee ?

That is, — 'Thou declarest Thyself MESSIAH, and claimest to be believed Now, all who have ever put forth any pretensions, have been able to appeal to

^k Lonsdale and Hale.
iv. 34.

^l See the foot-note ()
^m Dr. W. I

'What sign therefore shewest *Thou*?' Thou must display some transcendent miracle which may suffice to prove the justice of Thy claim.'—By which demand, it is implied that the miraculous feeding of the Five thousand which had taken place on the previous day, was in their estimation insufficient for the purpose. But our LORD, having therein given them an abundantly sufficient sign, 'instead of complying with their demand, proceeds to lay before them some deep truths which it required an earnest personal affection, and a firm conviction of the authority of His teaching, to accept.' Very different was the temper of the men who continue as follows :

What dost Thou work ? Our fathers did eat 81 manna in the desert ; as it is written, He gave them bread from Heaven to eat.

They refer to the miracle recorded in Exodus xvi. 4, 15. Their argument seems to be : 'Moses fed 600,000 Israelites with manna, during their wanderings in the wilderness : a sign from Heaven ! for, as it is said in the lxxviith Psalm, He gave them bread *from Heaven* to eat. Now, this lasted for a long series of years. Moreover, this miracle was repeated daily : and yet Moses raised no such pretensions as Thou raisest ; nor was he ever so believed in, as Thou requirest us to believe in Thee' . . . *A sign from Heaven*^a seems, in

^a Consider Isaiah vii. 11. Also St. Matth. xii. 38, compared with St. Luke xi. 16.

fact, to have been the thing which these unbelievers thought requisite for their conviction.

Here then was a twofold requirement. First, 'We must *see*,' (say they,) 'in order that we may believe : ' next, 'We must have a sign *from Heaven*, such as our Fathers had' . . . To their first requirement, our LORD's reply is found to have been,—'Ye have *seen* already; yet have ye not believed.' This, we shall discover by and by, from His language in ver. 36.—To their second demand, His reply is as follows :

- 32 Then JESUS said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from Heaven :

There is a double emphasis here. 'The bread you speak of did not come down *from Heaven*; but only from that upper region of the air, to which the name of Heaven is sometimes popularly given°. Moreover, it was not *Moses* who gave you that bread :

but My FATHER giveth unto you the true Bread from Heaven.

Here also, there is a double emphasis. Besides implying that the Bread spoken of was given them by *GOD*, not by *Moses*, our SAVIOUR proceeds,—'But the gift of My FATHER is the '*true Bread*': that spiritual Bread, namely, of which Manna was but the type or shadow^p. And this Bread truly

* As in Gen. i. 20 : vii. 11 : viii. 2, &c.

^p Compare St. John xv. 1. Also Heb. viii. 2 : ix. 24.

cometh down *from Heaven itself*,—even from that Heaven of Heavens where God dwelleth.*

By saying, '*My FATHER* giveth,'—the Divine Speaker implies that He is Himself the Son of God; and yet, of equal power with God. Consider St. John v. 17, 18; and the notes there. The Jews understood Him in this sense,—and not as contradicting what He had said before†: for we shall find them presently saying, — '*LORD*, evermore give us this bread'! . . . '*Giveth*' obviously implies 'is willing,' 'is prepared to give.'

For the Bread of God is He which cometh 33 down from Heaven, and giveth life unto the world.

Rather, '*For the Bread of God is that which cometh down from Heaven.*' Our LORD does not, apparently, explain that He is speaking of a *person*, until ver. 35.

In three other respects then is the Bread of which our LORD discourses, declared to be superior to the Manna which fed the Israelites: first, because it '*came*,' (not '*was poured*,') '*down*' from Heaven; next, because it conveyed the gift of eternal life; lastly, because it was to be a portion, not to the Jews alone, but '*unto the World.*'

In these three verses and the seventeen which follow, our LORD asserts the great truth of His Incarnation; and tells the Jews that this was the reality, of which the gift of Manna was but a sign.

* In ver. 27.

† See below, ver. 24.

'He states to them that the relation between Him and God, on which depended Man's happiness, was only to be maintained through Himself as Mediator: that into His Man's nature the Father had poured its gifts, and thus had communicated to Him the real food and sustenance of men. This was the fact which it had pleased God to signify by way of type; when He fed His people with manna in the wilderness; and He did so by coming into the World, had brought into the world among them the true principle of spiritual life and peace.'

34 Then said they unto Him, LORD, we know not what thou sayest: how can we give us this bread?

Their answer, which recalls that of the Samaritan woman*, is expressive of some degree of incredulity. 'LORD!'—it begins. They still suppose, that CHRIST speaks of bodily food,—of a nutritious kind, indeed, than their boasted manna; yet, like it, requiring to be periodically renewed. Wherefore they exclaim,—'*Evermore* give us this bread!' That is, 'Give us *day by day*.'

35 And Jesus said unto them, I am the Bread of Life: he that cometh to Me shall not hunger; and he that believeth on Me shall never thirst.

The Divine Speaker Himself was the 'Bread of Life' which He had spoken. To be made partakers of it.

* See St. John iv. 15.

ON ST. JOHN'S GOSPEL.

neof, men must 'come to Him;' that is, must *live* in Him^t. As many as do this will not *perish* that He should 'evermore' supply their *needs*; but will never hunger, never thirst again. This last saying further recalls our SAVIOUR's discourse to the Woman of Samaria^u; and the meaning of His words is in both places the same. It teaches that even here below, in the case of *believers* in His Divine Doctrines, *that* longing for unreal joys,—which may be fitly called thirst and hunger,—will altogether cease; while those *truly* desires of the soul, which in eternity will assuredly be fully appeased, will even here have their *spiritual* gratification. The analogy of other parts of Scripture^v abundantly prepares us for such *allegorical* language. But it is time to remind ourselves of the very holy ground which we are *approaching*; and to ascertain the general structure of the entire Discourse.

The great subject of the present Chapter has *been* already declared to be the Doctrine of the Holy Eucharist; but it cannot for a moment be *sought* that this lengthy specimen of our SAVIOUR's teaching refers directly, throughout, to *that* grand mystery. Indeed, the verses which *have* *exclusive* reference to the Sacrament of CHRIST's Body and Blood^x, will perhaps be found

Consider verses 37, 44, 45: also v. 40: vii. 37; and St. Matth. 23,—with the note. Rev. xxii. 17. ^u See St. John iv. 13, 14. Such as Deut. viii. 3. Is. lv. 1, 2. Jer. xv. 16. Amos viii. 11. Matth. v. 6. St. John iv. 13, 14: vii. 37. Heb. v. 12, &c.
As verses 53 to 56.

to be very few in number. Let the plain meaning of the words before us be attentively considered; and we shall be disposed to admit that although, in subsequent parts of the present chapter⁷, a Eucharistic meaning is so unequivocally fastened upon the expression 'The Bread of Life,' that the covert reference of the phrase in the present verse to the Holy Eucharist may reasonably be suspected, — yet would it be to deal unfairly with language to doubt, that our LORD is here rather declaring His own Divinity; and inviting men to Faith and Obedience. While a general promise is added 'that spiritual sustenance, even unto Life Eternal, will be the corresponding gift on the part of God*.'

On a review of the contents of the entire chapter, it will perhaps be thought that from ver. 26 to ver. 33, inclusive, is as it were introductory of the subject: that ver. 35 to ver. 50 treats of the Incarnation of CHRIST, and of Faith therein as the means of Life: while ver. 51 to ver. 58 is a building of the Doctrine of the Holy Eucharist on the Doctrine of the Incarnation; the Divine Speaker in that place advancing a step in His solemn discourse, by the mention for the first time of His '*flesh*.' From the lesser acts of Faith, He thus goes on to speak of the highest of all; and because His whole discourse points in the direction of the Holy Eucharist, even that part of it which relates to ordinary Belief, is conceived in language which has covert reference to Sacramental Communion.

⁷ As verses 51 to 58.

* Bp. Turton.

The *progressive* character of our LORD's teaching is in fact nowhere more clearly distinguishable than here. From the mention of 'Bread,' (in verse 31,) He takes occasion, first, (in verse 32,) to speak of the '*true* Bread:' next, (in verse 35,) He proclaims that He is *Himself* that Bread: then, (in verse 39,) He hints at *Résurrection* as the consequence of union with Himself: presently, (in verse 51,) He explains that His *Flesh* must be eaten: lastly, (in verse 53,) He makes open and repeated mention of His *Flesh and His Blood*.

He proceeds:

But I said unto you, that ye also have⁸⁶ both seen Me, and believe not.

'*I said* unto you:' from which it appears likely that He had used these words already; as will be found pointed out at the end of the note on ver. 31*. What follows should be translated 'Ye have *both* seen Me,' &c. It has reference to the demand of the Jews, in ver. 30; and is a refutation of the pretended need of some sign 'which they might *see*,' and on which they might base a rational belief in Him as CHRIST. The Jews had already beheld Him perform many miracles, (He tells them,) whereby they might have known Him to be the MESSIAH; and yet they believed not.—How this came to pass, His next words explain; and it was in order that He might supply those

* Consider St. John xi. 28 and 40, which are also instances of the same method.

words of explanation that He repeats ~~the saying~~ before us for the second time.

87 All that the FATHER giveth Me shall come to Me ;

That is,---No sign in and by itself can produce real conviction in the heart of man. Faith is God's own gift. There must be an inward calling from the FATHER, to enable any one to obey such an invitation as is contained in ver. 35, and come to CHRIST. 'A man must be given to Me, in order for him to become Mine.' This our LORD will be found to state more plainly lower down, in ver. 45,—where see the note. In illustration of this expression, see the references at foot*.

'All,' or rather 'everything' 'that the FATHER giveth Me, shall come to Me.' 'Everything,'—whether male or female, old or young, rich or poor, learned or simple, Jew or Gentile.—These words are prophetic of the Call of the Gentiles, while they imply the unbelief and consequent rejection of many of the Jews.

and he that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out.

By which words, our LORD declares that His Will is one and the same with that of the FATHER ; and that every individual believer whom the FATHER has willed should come to Him, He will graciously receive, and sanctify, and save.—To be

* See ver. 39 : also x. 29 : xvii. 2, 6, 9, 11, 12, 24 : xviii. 9.

ast out' is a well-known expression in the Gospel, descriptive of the fate of lost souls^b.

For I came down from Heaven, not to do 38
mine own Will, but the Will of Him that
sent Me.

That is,—‘For I came down from Heaven for
this very purpose; namely, to perform the merciful
Will of GOD towards mankind^c.’—He speaks
of the Son of Man. Now, *as such*, the FATHER’S
Will was prior, in point of time, to His; as well
as in its nature, independent of it. But in the
next two verses, He will speak as GOD—that
He raiseth the dead.—Compare the form of the ex-
pression in ver. 38, with what is met with in St.
John v. 30.

In the meantime, consider ‘the Will’ of GOD
with respect to the World, as it is declared in a
former chapter. ‘GOD so loved the World that He
gave His Only Begotten Son, that whosoever be-
lieveth in Him should not perish, but have ever-
lasting life^d.’ The process of Salvation is here
declared more plainly:—

And this is the FATHER’S Will which hath 39
sent Me, that of all which He hath given
me: I should lose nothing, but should raise
up again at the Last Day.

Literally,—‘And this is the will of Him that

See St. Matth. xxv. 30. ^c See the note on St. John iv. 34.

^d St. John iii. 16.

sent Me, [even] the FATHER; that of nothing which He hath given Me, should I lose [any part].’ See above, the latter part of the note on first clause of ver. 37.—Compare St. John xvii. 12.

The connexion of these words with those which precede will be perceived to be of the closest kind. The entire verse is more than an expansion of ver. 37, above. It *explains* that entire statement likewise: shewing that ‘casting out’ implies ‘loss;’ shewing also, that the momentous consequence of becoming CHRIST’S, is to be raised up by Him on the last day, and to be made a partaker in the Resurrection of the Just.

40 . And this is the Will of Him that sent Me, that every one which seeth the SON, and believeth on Him, may have Everlasting Life: and I will raise him up at the Last Day.

An important verse; for it contains an explanation of two of the sayings which have gone before. *Who*, (it might be asked,) are they whom ‘the FATHER giveth the SON?’ They are *as many as* ‘*behold the Son, and believe in Him*.’ And next,—What is meant by not being ‘lost?’ *The enjoyment of ‘Everlasting Life’* is meant thereby; which will be the consequence of being by Him raised up in the Last Day.

The several statements contained in this Discourse of our LORD, will be perceived on consideration to be, one and all, of the highest importance;

• Consider ver. 36.

ON ST. JOHN'S GOSPEL.

even for what He omits, a reason is discovered. Thus, if He says nothing of the Resurrection to unbelievers, it is because He is revealing Himself throughout as the Bread of *Life*.—But why does He say so much about Resurrection at all? It is, His hearers should suppose, either that in consequence of participation of the Bread of Life, they would never die; or dying, would experience further benefit from the heavenly food of which they had been partakers. He explains therefore, that Christian men, after being so nourished, do not indeed taste of Death; but, by virtue of such participation, will be restored to Life Eternal. ‘For many men doubt,’ (asks Hooker,) ‘but that we live from the flesh of CHRIST our very bodies do receive that life which shall make them glorious in the latter day; and from which they are already united parts of His Blessed Body?’

The Jews then murmured at Him, because ⁴¹ He said, I am the Bread which came down from Heaven.

Take notice that our LORD is nowhere recorded as having said these words; but the Jews rightly select a clause in ver. 35 with a clause in ver. 36 and make a complete sentence out of them: namely,—for our LORD Himself so speaks in ver. 35. Not content with disbelieving His statements, however, they are found to murmur at them likewise,—in the verses which follow:

And they said, Is not this JESUS, the son of ⁴²

of Joseph, whose Father and Mother we know? how is it then that He saith, I came down from Heaven?

They are offended by the Humanity of **CHRIST**, who was *legally*, (and as they supposed, *naturally*;) the Son of Joseph,—whose father Jacob^f, (or Heli^g;) as well as his mother, they also knew. Their blame lay not in this supposition; but in failing to recognise in His miracles, (if not in His discourse,) the evidence of One who was not mere Man. See St. John v. 36, and the note there.—Compare with the language of these unbelievers, what is found in St. Matthew xiii. 5 and St. Mark vi. 3: where see the notes.—Observe also, in passing, that our SAVIOUR does not deceive these men with reference to the mystery of His Birth. That great secret must as yet be kept hid from men and devils.

43 JESUS therefore answered and said unto
44 them, Murmur not among yourselves.
no man can come to Me, except the FATHER
which hath sent Me draw him:

Murmur not at My sayings, as if they were contrary to reason. The fault is not on My side, on yours; who are without that preventing grace which is requisite, before ye can come to Me believe My words. A man needs to be drawn by My FATHER before he can come to Me^h. O

^f St. Matth. i. 16.

^g St. Luke iii. 23.

^h Take notice how many of our Collects embody this doctrine.

the present text is re-worded below, in ver. 65,—
 ‘No man can come unto Me, except it were given
 unto him of My Father:’

and I will raise him up at the last day.

Compare that solemn address to the FATHER, where the SON says of Himself,—‘Thou hast given Him power over all flesh, that *He should give Eternal Life* to as many as *Thou hast given Him*’¹.

‘I will raise:’—which, unless He were the Bread of Life, He could not do. By thus reminding them of His Divine Power, He exposes to them the danger of murmuring at His words in a spirit of Unbelief. At the same time, He asserts His equality to the FATHER*: which was necessary; lest, from His repeated assertion that no one could come to Him unless the FATHER draw him, His hearers should suppose that, as touching His Godhead, He was inferior to the FATHER.

It is written in the prophets, And they 45
 shall be all taught of God.

In other words,—What I have said of the impossibility of a man’s coming to me with Faith, ‘except the FATHER draw him,’ is the fulfilment of

e. g. Second Collect at Evening Prayer; 5th after Easter; 1st, 9th, 17th, 19th, after Trinity; the Fourth Collect after the Communion Service, &c.

¹ St. John xvii. 2.

* See the notes on St. John v. 17, 18: also above, the note on the latter part of ver. 32.

what 'the prophets,' and Isaiah^j in particular, foretold; when they described the Covenant of the Gospel, as one under which all should be 'taught of God!'

Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the FATHER, cometh unto Me.

That is,—'Every one, therefore, who,'—like Simon Peter on a previous occasion^k,—'hears the FATHER's teaching, and is willing to learn of it, is drawn by My FATHER, and so cometh, as a believer, unto Me!'^l Consider what is said of Lydia, in Acts xvi. 14.

These words of course are not intended to depreciate the human preaching of the Gospel: for consider Romans x. 14, 15. They do but declare that no external helps can avail without an inward drawing of the heart, and illumination of the soul, by God. As it is written, 'Neither is he that planteth, any thing; neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase^m.'

Then, to guard against any gross misconception of His Divine meaning, He adds:

- 46 Not that any man hath seen the FATHER, save He which is of God, He hath seen the FATHER.

^j Is. liv. 13. See also the other places referred to in the margin.

^k See St. Matth. xvi. 17.

^l Lonsdale and Hale.

^m 1 Cor. iii. 7. And consider Ephes. i. 17, 18.

'In other words,—Not that the hearing and learning of the FATHER which I speak of, is effected with the bodily organs,—as when pupils see the Teacher who instructs them. He which is Begotten of the FATHER, and He which Proceedeth from the FATHER, alone hath so seen the FATHER.

In ver. 44, our LORD asserted (1) the need of a Heavenly drawing, to enable a man in the first instance to come to Him ;—and (2) He promised Resurrection to eternal Life, as the final result of such coming. Verses 45 and 46 contain some explanation of the former of those two sayings. The latter saying, in an expanded form, seems to be repeated in ver. 47, which follows ; and the Blessed Speaker, because He is about to resume and enforce a Doctrine already laid down, begins, (as His Divine manner is *,) with the well-known phrase of solemn asseveration,—a phrase peculiar to St. John's Gospel.

Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that 47 believeth on Me hath everlasting Life.

This should be compared with St. John v. 24,—
' Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth My Word, and believeth on Him that sent Me, hath Everlasting Life, and shall not come into Condemnation ; but is passed from Death unto Life.' See the notes on that passage.

* As in St. John iii. 2, 5, 11 : v. 19 : vi. 26, 32 : x. 1, 7 : xiv. 12, &c.

Take notice therefore that the very foundation of all that follows, is Faith.

‘*Hath* everlasting Life,’—because he hath the present right to it. ‘*Hath*’ it, also,—because he hath already entered upon the present enjoyment of that which will become Everlasting Life hereafter. ‘This is Life Eternal,’ (said our SAVIOUR on another occasion,) ‘to know Thee the only true God, and JESUS CHRIST whom Thou hast sent*.’

First then, the reason is briefly assigned why those who believe in CHRIST have everlasting Life:

8 I am that Bread of Life.

‘And,’ (it is implied,) ‘I nourish those that come to Me.’

When our LORD is called ‘the living Bread,’ (as in ver. 51,) it seems to be taught that He hath the principle of Life in Himself: when, ‘the Bread of Life,’ as here,—that in Him is vested the lofty privilege of conveying the gift of Life to others.

9 Your fathers did eat manna in the wilder-
0 ness, and are dead. This is the Bread which
cometh down from Heaven, that a man may
eat thereof, and not die.

Because he speaks of Himself in this place as God, He says ‘*Your* fathers,’ not ‘*Our*,’—as in chap. iv. He then contrasts the manna, given by Moses, with the gift of this Bread which came

* St. John xvii. 3.

down from Heaven. Those who partook of the former bread, were thereby sustained in temporal life, yet not preserved from death. They all died ; and the manna will not avail to raise them up at the last day. But the Bread which CHRIST giveth, —though the recipient thereof, in due course of nature, must perforce die,—availeth to raise up to a blessed Immortality that Body whose mere temporal life it was never intended to sustain. He continues :

I am the living Bread which came down 51
from Heaven : if any man eat of this Bread,
he shall live for ever :

See above, the note on ver. 41.—In that CHRIST is '*Bread*,' He is the support of those who feed upon Him. In that He is '*the living Bread*' and hath the principle of Life in Himself, He is able to impart the gift of Life to others. In that He came down '*from Heaven*,' this Life of His is Heavenly not Earthly,—eternal not transitory. Hence, the Blessed Speaker adds,—'*If any man eat of this Bread, He shall live for ever.*'

The next words introduce a fresh statement. It should not perhaps be said that there is here a transition to another subject. The Divine Speaker seems rather to advance one step in His solemn Discourse,—distinctly alluding, in all that follows, to the Sacrament of the LORD'S Supper.

and the Bread that I will give is My

Flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.

That the 'Bread' of which He had been hitherto speaking was His own 'Flesh,' our LORD here explains for the first time. He adds that this was to be a propitiatory sacrifice *on behalf of mankind*; and declares that it would be His own free gift. So singular an announcement is found to produce strife and debate among His auditory.

- 52 The Jews therefore strove among themselves, saying, How can this Man give *His* flesh to eat?

Compare the inquiry of Nicodemus, in chap. 4. When our LORD had said, 'Except a man be born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God,' the other made answer, 'How can a man be born when he is old?' Our SAVIOUR, in reply, with peculiar solemnity and claim to attention, pointed out the possibility and the means of being born again; as well as the necessity of such Regeneration: 'Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of Water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God.'—On the present occasion, His answer corresponds to that given to Nicodemus, even to the very turn of the sentenceⁿ.

- 53 Then JESUS said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the Flesh

ⁿ Bp. Cleaver.

the Son of Man, and drink His Blood, ye have no Life in you.

It will be perceived that He does not seek to abate the wonder which His words have occasioned, by simplifying, much less by withdrawing any part of His former assertion. On the contrary, He repeats the statement with solemn asseveration,—mentions His Blood, in addition to His Flesh,—and concludes with the startling assurance that without participation in these, men have ‘no life’ in them.—Take notice, in passing, that our Church, as a faithful witness and keeper of Holy Writ, hath not failed to remind her children, in the Exhortation ‘at the time of the celebration of the Communion,’ of the solemn statement contained in this verse and in ver. 56.

Notwithstanding this plain declaration, however, and the express command, ‘Drink ye *all* of it,’—one mighty section of the Church of CHRIST, perseveres in the sinful novelty of denying the Sacrament of His Blood to the laity°.

It would be almost an omission to pass on, without calling attention to the noble exposition of Catholic Truth contained in the following passage of our own Hooker.—‘The grace which we have by the Holy Eucharist doth not begin but continue Life. No man therefore receiveth this Sacrament before Baptism, because no dead thing is capable of nourishment. That which groweth

° Consider St. Matth. xxvi. 27. and the note there.

must of necessity first live. If our bodies did not daily waste, food to restore them were a thing superfluous. And it may be that the grace of Baptism would serve to Eternal Life, were it not that the state of our spiritual being is daily so much hindered and impaired after Baptism. In that life therefore where neither body nor soul can decay, our souls shall as little require this Sacrament as our bodies corporal nourishment; but as long as the days of our warfare last, during the time that we are both subject to diminution and capable of augmentation in grace, the words of our LORD and SAVIOUR CHRIST will remain forcible,—‘Except ye eat the Flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His Blood, ye have no life in you.’

‘Life’ (he continues) ‘being therefore proposed unto all men as their end, they which by Baptism have laid the foundation and attained the first beginning of a new life, have here their nourishment and food prescribed for *continuance of life* in them. Such as will live the life of God must eat the Flesh and drink the Blood of the Son of Man; because this is a part of that diet which, if we want, we cannot live.’

The Rubric at the end of ‘the Communion of the Sick’ will here occur to some readers:—‘But if a man, either by reason of extremity of sickness, or for want of warning in due time to the Curate, or for lack of company to receive with him, or by any other just impediment, do not receive the

rament of CHRIST's Body and Blood, the Curate instruct him, that if he do truly repent him his sins, and steadfastly believe that JESUS CHRIST hath suffered death upon the Cross for him, and shed His Blood for his Redemption,—heartily remembering the benefits he hath thereby, and giving Him hearty thanks therefore,—he may eat and drink the Body and Blood of our LORD CHRIST profitably to his Soul's health, though he do not receive the Sacrament with mouth.'—It might appear undutiful, were we to omit so remarkable a statement of Doctrine here on this subject; especially after the extracts from Hooker which precede.

Let no one, however, be so perverse as to suppose that the Church is here sanctioning the monstrous opinion that 'every holy prayer and devout meditation render the faithful soul a partaker of CHRIST *in the same sense* that His own Sacrament does^p.' And yet, by parity of reasoning, what we hold concerning certain persons who die unbaptized we may well hold concerning some who die uncommunicate. As 'it has been constantly held, as well touching other martyrs as martyrs, that Baptism *taken away by necessity* is supplied by desire of Baptism^q,'—the same may reasonably be thought touching cases arising in regard of the Eucharist. Far safer however is it, not to speculate, but by all means to endeavour to obey. 'With God,' (remarks an old

^p Keble.

^q Hooker.

writer, 'inasmuch as He is their Author, the Sacraments may be dispensed withal: with Man, inasmuch as his duty is to obey, they may not possibly be dispensed with. For it is in the power of God, independently of them, to save: but it is not in the power of any, without them, to attain to Salvation'.—On all this subject, the reader is referred to the note on St. John iii. 5. And now to proceed.

54 Whoso eateth My Flesh, and drinketh My Blood, hath eternal Life; and I will raise him up at the last Day.

'And,' in this place, denotes *consequence*,—as in ver. 44. The promise is thus repeated for the fourth time*.

The *progressive* character of our LORD's teaching, observable throughout all His Discourses, and in none more clearly than in this, (as was pointed out above, in the note on verse 35,) may be recognised even here; where, to an inattentive reader, He may seem to be merely repeating what He had said in the previous verse. For (1st), By the new word which He employs to denote 'eating,' (and which He repeats in verses 56, 57, and 58,) He puts it out of all doubt that what He refers to is a 'pressing with the teeth' of 'the Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ'. And (2ndly),

* Hugo, referred to in a note by Hooker.

* See above, verses 39, 40, 44.

* The word recurs in St. John xiii. 18,—a memorable place.

What our SAVIOUR delivered negatively in the former verse, He here delivers with affirmation,—using the language of encouragement, not of threatening. Consider, in connexion with the declaration of our LORD at the end of the verse, the language used in delivering the consecrated elements. ‘The Body of our LORD JESUS CHRIST which was given for thee,’—‘The Blood of our LORD JESUS CHRIST which was shed for thee,—preserve thy *body and soul to everlasting Life.*’

For My Flesh is meat indeed, and My 55
Blood is drink indeed.

That is why CHRIST, in the two verses which precede, has been insisting on the necessity of participation. He proceeds to explain how it happens thát. they are instrumental for the transmission of eternal Life.

He that eateth My Flesh, and drinketh 56
My Blood, dwelleth in Me, and I in him.

Rather, ‘*Abideth in Me.*’ That is,—‘Becometh mystically united to Me:’ ‘Is made one with Me, and I with him, by a secret and spiritual union^u.’—And thus, for the fourth time, in four successive verses, our SAVIOUR makes mention of His own Flesh to be eaten, His own Blood to be drunk,—thereby forcibly calling attention to that very remarkable expression, and putting it out of doubt that He is alluding to that Blessed Sacrament;

^u See the note on St. John xiv. 20.

whereof 'the inward part, or thing signified,' is declared in our Catechism to be 'the Body and Blood of CHRIST, which are verily and indeed taken and received by the faithful in the LORD's Supper.'

Of *the manner* of our LORD's presence in this great Sacrament, we are not disposed to dispute. 'Where God Himself doth speak those things which either for height and sublimity of matter, or else for accuracy of purpose we are not able to reach unto, as we may be ignorant without danger, so it can be no disgrace to confess we are ignorant^x.' Enough for us to know that 'the Cup of Blessing which we bless' is '*the Communication of the Blood of CHRIST,*' — 'the Bread which we break,' '*the Communication of His Body*;' and that, 'by the faithful in the LORD's Supper,' His 'Body and Blood are verily and indeed taken and received.' Firmly embracing this blessed Truth, let us be content to 'feed on Him in our hearts by Faith, with Thanksgiving;' and, (in the words of an ancient Father,) 'adore, while others dispute^z.'

Our LORD proceeds:

- 7 As the living FATHER hath sent Me, and I live by the FATHER: so he that eateth Me, even he shall live by Me.

It is not quite certain whether our SAVIOUR here speaks of Himself as God, or as Man. But it is true, even as God, that He 'lives by the

^x Hooker.

^y 1 Cor. x. 16.

^z Augustine.

FATHER^a. This is but another way of expressing His eternal Generation.

The words before us may perhaps be thus paraphrased,—As the living **FATHER** sent Me in the flesh; and by virtue of the consequent Union of the Godhead, (which I have by Communication from Him,) with the Manhood, Eternal Life is conveyed to this else perishable Human Body;—even so shall he, who by sacramental participation unites himself with Me,—even he shall live by Me.—The entire passage recalls St. Paul's argument in Romans viii. 11.—‘Sacraments,’ (says Hooker,) ‘are the powerful instruments of God to Eternal Life. For as our natural Life consisteth in the union of the Body with the Soul; so our life supernatural in the union of the Soul with God.’

This is that Bread which came down from 58 Heaven: not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead: he that eateth of this Bread shall live for ever.

And thus does our **LORD** conclude the entire Discourse, and dismiss His mighty theme,—repeating some of the sayings which He will be found to have delivered in verses 32, 33, and 49, 50, 51.—As if He said,—‘This then is the Bread I spake of, as coming down from Heaven, and giving Life unto the World: and herein is it superior to that Manna which your Fathers partook

^a See more in the notes on St. John v. 20, and 26: also xiv. 28.

of, and which had no power to bestow eternal Life.'

Hooker, in his majestic way, observes,—‘CHRIST having Adam’s nature as we have, but incorrupt, deriveth not Nature but Incorruption, and that immediately, from His own person into all that belong to Him. As therefore we are really partakers of the Body of Sin and Death received from Adam, so except we be truly partakers of CHRIST, and as really possessed of His Spirit, all we speak of Eternal Life is but a dream.’—Ignatius, the earliest of the Fathers, has a brief but pregnant allusion to the present Discourse of our LORD, when he declares the Sacramental Bread to be ‘an antidote against Death,—the Medicine of Immortality.’

59 These things said He in the Synagogue, as He taught in Capernaum.

St. John, as his manner is^b, fixes the locality in which this momentous discourse was delivered;—the same Synagogue, doubtless, which the faithful Centurion built in order to shew his love toward the Jewish nation^c!—‘Other discourses in St. John, as that in the former Chapter^d, seem as if they were delivered before some formal assembly or Council, though it is not mentioned; and here it only seems to be introduced incidentally, though

^b See the note on St. John iv. 6, foot-note (y) p. 107.

^c See St. Luke vii. 5,—which ought to be translated ‘the Synagogue.’ There doubtless was but one, at Capernaum.

^d See the note on St. John v. 18.

doubtless not so; and it is an interesting and remarkable addition to the discourse^e.'

Many therefore of His Disciples, when 60 they had heard *this*, said, This is an hard saying; who can hear it?

'A hard Doctrine,' truly: yet was the hardness which called for complaint, wholly their own. Judging from our SAVIOUR's discourse which follows, and the expressions in ver. 58, above,—two things seem chiefly to have perplexed His Disciples: (1) His assertion that He had come down from Heaven,—(2) His requirement that His flesh must be eaten. Accordingly, it follows:

When JESUS knew in Himself that His 61 disciples murmured at it, He said unto them, Doth this offend you?

Is it a stumbling-block in the way of your belief that I should say,—'I am the living Bread which came down from Heaven'?

What and if ye shall see the Son of Man 62 ascend up where He was before?

By this prophecy of His future Ascension,—(an event which in St. John's Gospel is twice alluded to^g, but nowhere described,)—our LORD may be thought to have supplied a seasonable check to the unbelief, which His hearers had conceived on hearing Him say that He had come

^e Williams. ^f See above, ver. 51. ^g See St. John xx. 17.

down from Heaven; while His words will suggested that, not as Man, but God, He was to prove the channel of life to mankind

But the true purpose of this saying was less of a yet loftier nature. He intended to cure His auditory of low carnal notions concerning what He had been delivering; and lift up to the spiritual appreciation of His discourse. He asks,—‘If therefore ye believe in the Son of Man ascending up where He was (evidently implying,)—‘What will ye say? Ye will no longer ask, How can this Man eat His flesh to eat? Ye will be constrained to lay up all such carnal imaginations, and to think of Him only as God, and after some lofty fashion, I propose to do this thing!’ Consider the marvellous words to Mary in the garden (doubtless) she stretched out her arms, and embraced His knees:—‘Touch Me not; I am *not yet ascended*^k.’

We are once more forcibly reminded of our discourse with Nicodemus. ‘How can the Son of Man be?’ exclaimed the master of Israel: to which the LORD replied,—‘Knowest thou not these things? . . . If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you heavenly things?’—words which seem to introduce the saying which follows:

^b Cyril.

ⁱ Amplified from a hint of Acts

^k St. John xx. 17, where see the note.

^l St. John iii. 9 to 12.

the Spirit that quickeneth ; the Flesh 63
 1 nothing.

ly—'The Spirit is that which giveth life;' 'with alive.' By which name, (of Spirit,) place, our SAVIOUR speaks of 'His Divine, and to His Human Nature. He explains to wondering Disciples that those miraculous which were to attend the reception of His would not arise from its natural influence, (Flesh of Man,) but from that supernatural with which it was endowed,' in consequence of the entire union of the Godhead with Manhood in His Person. 'The word *Spirit* is commonly used in Holy Scripture and in the writers of our age, to express that Divine Nature in which it properly pertaineth to quicken, and give life to mortals : in respect whereof, CHRIST is 'the Prince of Life,' in Acts iii. 15 ; and 'the Son of Life,' in St. John i. 4.' The truth here is, therefore, is, that our LORD's Manhood is the principle of Life, by reason of the union with which it was united. Hence, in the Sermon on the Resurrection of the Body, St. Paul is bound to use these same words concerning Adam, 'The first man Adam,' (he says,) 'was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a living *Spirit* ^m.'

^m 1 Cor. xv. 45.

The words that I speak unto you, spirit, and *they* are life.

Some explain it thus,—Let what I have said to you be understood spiritually. Ye are not of this flesh which ye behold with your eyes; ye drink the crimson current which flows in your veins; yet, under sacramental emblem, faithful men verily and indeed become partakers of both in My Supper.

But the following seems better:—I have said from the reasonings of your hearts, that ye foolishly suppose Me to have said that this Body can naturally impart Life. That was the purport of My discourse. I have said together concerning the Divine Spirit, and concerning Life Eternal . . . Wherefore, the words which I have spoken unto you, ‘are Spirit, and *they* are spiritual, and about the Spirit is Life;’ that is, are life-giving, and concerning which is in its essential nature, Life.’ See also of Alexandria in his noble Commentary on the Gospel of St. John.

64 But there are some of you that say, *they* are not.

He foresaw that some were about to say so of Him. He therefore assigned beforehand the occasion of their departure: which lay in the thing which *He* had spoken, but in *the* words.—The present sentence will be found

below, in ver. 65: 'Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto Me,' &c.

(For JESUS knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who should betray Him.)

Which parenthetical words of the Evangelist have reference partly to what follows in ver. 66, and partly to what follows in ver. 70, 71.—'The Evangelist wishes to shew us, that CHRIST knew all things before the foundation of the World; which was a proof of His Divinity*.' He continues to relate the saying of CHRIST, which He had interrupted half-way:

And He said, Therefore said I unto you, 65 that no man can come unto Me, except it were given unto him of My FATHER.

That is,—Because I was made aware by the Spirit within Me, that some among you are unbelievers, I made the remark some time since,—'No man can come to Me, except the FATHER which hath sent Me draw himⁿ.' 'As if He said, —Men's unbelief does not disturb or astonish Me. I know to whom the FATHER hath given to come to Me[§].' ... And this is the end of the subject.

From that *time* many of His Disciples 66 went back, and walked no more with Him.

* Theophylact.

ⁿ Ver. 44.

§ Chrysostom.

It is not *certain* that St. John meant to say that 'from that time' many fell away from Christ. He may have meant, that it was 'from this [circumstance,]'—'in consequence of this [discourse]'—or the like..... 'When you hear, however, His Disciples 'murmuring' and 'going back,' understand not those really such; but rather such as who, as far as their behaviour went, seemed to be receiving instruction from Him. For, among His followers were some of the people, who were called Disciples, because they companied with His Disciples*.'

67 Then said JESUS unto the Twelve, Will ye also go away?

Take notice that though He had all along foreseen this defection of certain of His followers, (miserable men!), yet had He continued lovingly to plead with them till now. Seeing many thus fall away from Him, He sadly asks the Twelve whether they intend to go away likewise? Words which at once implied the freedom of the will in those whom He addressed, and provoked them to a noble confession by the largeness of the good at stake, which His recent discourse had brought before them.—Simon Peter returns answer in the name of all the rest^o:

68 Then Simon Peter answered Him, LORD, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words

* Theophylact.

• So Cyril and Chrysostom.

of Eternal Life. And we believe and are sure 69 that Thou art that CHRIST, the SON of the living God.

‘This is an hard saying,’—the others had declared. Better taught, the Apostle, (with allusion to what his LORD had said in ver. 63,) confesses that His Master’s sayings have the savour of ‘Eternal Life.’—Some again there were ‘that believed not?’ but ‘We,’ (says St. Peter, in behalf of His fellow-Apostles,) ‘We believe and know that Thou art the CHRIST, the SON of the living God!’

JESUS answered them, Have not I chosen 70 you Twelve, and one of you is a devil?

‘Chosen’ by CHRIST; yet able to become ‘a devil!’ Therefore hath God left the will of Man perfectly free! ‘His election does not impose any necessity upon [the person with [respect to the future; but leaves it in the power of his will, to be saved or perish*.’

Notice the rebuke implied in these words of our LORD. ‘We believe and know,’—St. Peter had said; and the whole body of his fellow-Apostles will have largely sympathized in the loving forwardness of that prompt Confession. They will have beheld some of the other Disciples wavering: perhaps they will have heard some openly professing their resolve to walk with CHRIST no longer.

* Ver. 64.

* Chrysostom.

A PLAIN COMMENTARY

Meantime, a hedge seemed to have been set up for themselves; and standing, as they probably did, apart from the multitude, and keeping to themselves (which appears to have been their wont on all occasions besides the present¹), they may have felt as if entire faithfulness and perfect obedience were at least *their* portion. 'Have not we a choice of *you*,—the Twelve?' (exclaims our Lord) 'and yet, one of *you* is a devil!'—shewing that His language in ver. 64 was applicable, and doubtless been addressed, to one of *themselves* also. He calls Judas 'a devil;' not only by his means, Satan was to assail CHRIST; but because he was to fall, (if he had not fallen,) from a state of uprightness, as Satan himself had done, to a state of utter and unrepentant wickedness.

By this solemn word of warning, doubtless the entire company of the Disciples will have been rendered more humble, more watchful, and more apprehensive. The name of the traitor was fully withheld,—whereby all were profited; and each one trembled lest *he* might prove the same man. 'Mark the wisdom of CHRIST,' (see ver. 58.) 'He neither, by exposing Judas, made him shameless and contentious; nor emboldens him, by allowing him to think himself concealed.'

The checks, hints, warnings which follow to the last, are addressed to Judas Iscariot, (

¹ Consider St. Matthew xii. 49.

number what any one would suppose who had never attended to the circumstance. Some remarks have been already offered on the subject in the note on St. Mark xiv. 25. Take notice that Judas must have been a good man when CHRIST chose him,—namely, about a year before; and it is not certain from the present words that Judas had even *yet* fallen. The words of CHRIST are therefore words of warning addressed to Judas,—whom He nevertheless '*knew* should betray Him.' And thus we are unexpectedly brought upon the contemplation of one of the deepest and most perplexing questions in speculative Divinity: concerning which it is safer to meditate than to argue; and safest of all *to obey*. 'The secret things belong unto the LORD our God: but those things which are revealed, belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may *do* all the words of this Law*.'

He spake of Judas Iscariot *the son* of 71 Simon: for he it was that should betray Him, being one of the Twelve.

Thus, for the seventh or eighth time in the course of one brief chapter, did our SAVIOUR shew that the future, as well as the unseen present, is all exposed to His Almighty ken*.—Take notice that, on the first four occasions on which St. John speaks of Judas Iscariot, he always adds 'the son

* Deut. xxix. 29.

* Consider verses 6, 15, 26, 43, 51, 61, 64, 71.

of Simon^t,'—to distinguish him from his namesake, our Lord's cousin. The clause—'being one of the Twelve,'—is a special reference to the four preceding verses is the only comment, if comment it can which the four Evangelists any where make traitor's crime^u.

'It is very remarkable,' (says a pious the close of his Commentary on this —'that as so much is said of the Holy being a savour of Life unto Life, or of Death,—even *Discourse* respecting it is work awfully the same effects. Thus, on sent occasion, not only many Disciples but even among the Twelve, it brings fully, for the first time, the light and th—in St. Peter, the blessed Confession and in respect of Judas, the first disclosure to his having a devil. . . . Great reason there for caution when this awful doctrine is cussed^x !'

^t St. John vi. 71 : xii. 4 : xiii. 2 : xiii. 26. There of mistake in ver. 29, or afterwards.

^u See the note on St. Matth. xxvi. 47. ^x Wil

PLAIN COMMENTARY

ON THE SEVENTH CHAPTER OF

St. John's Gospel.

JESUS reproveth the ambition and boldness of His kinsmen: 10 goeth up from Galilee to the Feast of Tabernacles: 14 teacheth in the Temple. 40 Divers opinions of Him among the people. 45 The Pharisees are angry that their officers took Him not, and chide with Nicodemus for taking His part.

II. AFTER these things JESUS walked in *ilee*: for He would not walk in Jewry, *ause* the Jews sought to kill Him.

he Evangelist St. John thus assigns the reason our SAVIOUR did not go up to Jerusalem to the Third Passover. To speak more accurately,—he is here accounting for our SAVIOUR'S absence from the Capital for the entire space of *teen* months. He abode in Galilee, instead: rather, He '*walked*' there; for, to the period *prised* in the present verse is to be referred journey into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon, which comprised a circuit East of the Sea of Gali-

To the same period belongs the miraculous

* St. Matth. xv. 21 to 29. St. Mark vii. 24 to 31.

feeding of the Four Thousand^b: the journey through the towns of Cæsarea Philippi; and the Transfiguration^c. Six months of our SAVIOUR'S Ministry had in fact elapsed, since the miracle recorded in the former chapter: concerning which interval the beloved Disciple was divinely guided to preserve no single word of record; but to pass on at once from the Passover season, to the Feast of Tabernacles.

The occasion of this prolonged retirement in Galilee proves therefore to have been the murderous intentions of 'the Jews;' of which we had the first intimation in chap. v. 16, 18; and which seem to have dated from the time of the cure of the impotent man at the Pool of Bethesda, recorded in chap. v. Those intentions are found to have been rife in the Capital, at this very season; as our SAVIOUR'S language on confronting His enemies shews^d; and as their subsequent conduct abundantly attests^e. The pretended ground for these wicked designs is zeal for God's Honour,—occasioned by our LORD'S supposed breach of the Fourth and First Commandments^f. Amazing blindness! which nothing but a long course of Sin can be supposed to have produced. And take notice, that it was the publicity which the Miracle had acquired by the formal defence of the Holy

^b St. Matth. xv. 32 to 39. St. Mark viii. 1 to 9.

^c St. Matth. xvii. 1 to 8. St. Mark ix. 2 to 8. St. Luke ix. 28 to 36.

^d See below, ver. 20 and 25.

^e See below, verses 30, 32, 44, 45. ^f See St. John v. 16, 18.

One before the Court of Sanhedrin^g, which must be presumed to have rendered its Author so obnoxious in the eyes of the Jewish Rulers. Their enmity was not one whit abated, though a full year and a half had elapsed since the transaction alluded to took place.

Now the Jews' feast of Tabernacles was ² at hand.

It was therefore now the Autumn of the year; for the Feast of Tabernacles, or of Ingathering as it was sometimes called, was 'in the end of the year, when thou hast gathered in thy labours out of the field^h,'—'thy corn and thy wineⁱ.' It began on the 15th day of the seventh month, Tisri, which corresponds with part of our September and October; and lasted for eight days,—the first and last being 'a solemn assembly,' and 'a sabbath^j.' The Festival itself was intended as a memorial of the time when the Israelites dwelt in tents in the Wilderness^k; and it beautifully shadowed forth that season, yet future, when CHRIST should tabernacle in the flesh, and 'dwell among us^l.' It was, in fact, one of those three great annual Feasts, when as many of the Commonwealth of Israel as were able, being males,

^g See the note on St. John v. 18.

^h Exod. xxiii. 16.

ⁱ Deut. xvi. 13.

^j Numb. xxix. 12 to 38. Compare Levit. xxiii. 36, 39 : Numb. xxix. 35.

^k See Levit. xxiii. 43.

^l See St. John i. 14, and the note there.

presented themselves before the LORD in His Temple^m: and our SAVIOUR, (like a Son in His own Houseⁿ), is found to have appeared with them.

Many were the august ceremonies with which this Festival was kept; one of which will be found alluded to in the note on ver. 37. But the Jewish people do not seem to have obeyed the letter of their Law, which required that they should 'take boughs of goodly trees, branches of palm-trees, and the boughs of thick trees, and willows of the brook;' and rejoice before the LORD their God, 'dwelling in booths seven days.' One such observance of this solemn Festival, indeed, took place in the time of Nehemiah; when the Children of the Captivity are said to have 'found written in the Law' 'that they should proclaim in all their cities and in Jerusalem, saying, Go forth unto the Mount, and fetch olive branches, and pine branches, and myrtle branches, and palm branches, and branches of thick trees, to make booths:' (which may perhaps be regarded as an ancient Jewish exposition of Levit. xxiii. 40, 42, already quoted.) Thereupon it is recorded that 'the people went forth, and made themselves booths, every one upon the roof of his house, and in their courts, and in the courts of the House of God, and in the street of the water gate, and in the street of the gate of Ephraim:' but it is ex-

^m Exod. xxiii. 14 to 17. Deut. xvi. 1 to 17. See St. Luke ii. 41.

ⁿ Hebrews iii. 6.

• Levit. xxiii. 40, 42.

pressly added that, '*since the days of Jeshua the son of Nun* unto that day, had not the Children of Israel done so.' That is, they had failed to obey this part of the Law for a thousand years.

How this Festival was observed in the time of our LORD, is not known precisely : but inasmuch as it was the practice of every pious Israelite who was able to comply with the requirement of the Law, to repair to Jerusalem, 'in the Feast of unleavened Bread, and in the Feast of Weeks, and in the Feast of Tabernacles^p,'—it follows :

His Brethren therefore said unto Him, ³ Depart hence, and go into Judæa, that Thy Disciples also may see the works that Thou doest : for *there is* no man *that* doeth any ⁴ thing in secret, and he himself seeketh to be known openly. If Thou do these things, shew Thyself to the World.

The scene where these words were spoken is not recorded. It seems likely however that Nazareth was the place,—*that* being the home of CHRIST's 'Brethren' after the flesh. Concerning the persons alluded to, see what has been offered on the places indicated at foot^q. They were probably the sons of another Mary, who was wife of Clopas, and sister of the Blessed Virgin ; and their names,

• Nehemiah viii. 13 to 17.

p Deuteronomy xvi. 16.

q St. Matth. xii. 47 : xiii. 55. St. Mark iii. 31 : vi. 3.

—‘James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas!’ Of these brothers, one at least (Jude) was a member of the Apostolic body^a. It was not therefore *all* ‘the Brethren’ of CHRIST who addressed Him in the manner here recorded. Indeed, the suggestion in the heading of the chapter may very well be correct; namely, that the speakers were certain of His ‘kinsmen,’ generally.

These men therefore urge our LORD to proceed to the Capital, and there to shew Himself openly; not to continue His residence in the remote region of Galilee,—travelling about secretly^b, and seeking (however vainly) to be hid^c. Marvellous works our SAVIOUR did indeed perform in that despised district; and ‘the Brethren’ are observed here to make two distinct allusions to them: but these did not attract the same measure of attention, nor procure for their Divine Author the same renown, which was achieved by His few miracles wrought at Jerusalem. Thus, the cure of the impotent man, recorded in St. John v., had evidently obtained such notoriety, that at this very time our LORD’s personal safety in the Capital was endangered. Consider verse 21, lower down, and see the note there.

But while malignity was devising the destruction of the Holy One in the very spot where He had wrought such stupendous acts of Mercy, not

^a See St. Matth. xiii. 55, and St. Mark vi. 3.

^b See the note on ‘Thaddæus,’ in St. Mark iii. 18,—vol. ii. p. 74.

^c St. Mark ix. 30.

^d See St. Mark vii. 24.

a few faithful hearts are found to have entertained towards Him a humble measure of faith and love^v. Our SAVIOUR had already many 'Disciples' in Jerusalem; and His cousins at Nazareth are found to have grown impatient that their great Kinsman should gather these about Himself,—openly declare His pretensions, and proclaim His Mission. Such is apparently the purport of the sayings in verses 3 and 4.

The worldly spirit which that address of 'the Brethren' reveals, is much to be noticed. The speakers knew nothing of that goodness which seeks 'the honour that cometh from God only^w.' As little did they know of that heavenly method which our SAVIOUR CHRIST was at this very time pursuing,—in gathering together the outcasts, and fetching home the wanderers from the fold; extending His kingdom upon Earth by methods which to men seemed foolishness; building up His Church out of the 'base things of the world, and things which are despised, yea, and things which are not^x.' They were ambitious of human honour; and thought all lost which was done in secret. Thus, they were led to reject their Mighty Kinsman, (as the people of Nazareth had twice done before^y), and to regard Him with secret unbelief. Of this, the Evangelist himself assures us in the very next verse.—'How can ye believe,'

^v See St. John ii. 23: vii. 31.

^w St. John v. 44.

^x 1 Cor. i. 28.

^y See St. Luke iv. 16 to 30, and St. Matth. xiii. 54 to 58.

(our SAVIOUR had already asked the Jews at Jerusalem,) '*which receive honour one of another*'?

- 5 For neither did His Brethren believe in Him.

This truly marvellous statement suggests many important inferences as to what must have been our SAVIOUR's method with His immediate followers. There had been no special works wrought for their personal conviction. Much less had any constraint been put upon their wills and affections. And perhaps it was to guide us to some such reflections, that the Evangelist here records the unbelief of 'the Brethren' of CHRIST.

- 6 Then JESUS said unto them, My time is not yet come :

Rather, 'My season.' A certain moment is spoken of, well known in the deep counsels of God: the hour, namely, 'that He should depart out of this World unto the FATHER^a.' Until that 'hour' had '*come*,' CHRIST would not shew Himself openly; nor indeed could any 'lay hands on Him^b.' It came at last; and then He distinctly proclaimed its arrival^c, and 'stedfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem^d.'—In the meantime, the Blessed Speaker contrasts the position of His

^a St. John v. 44.

^a St. John xiii. 1.

^b See below, ver. 30. Also chap. viii. 20.

^c St. John xii. 23: xvii. 1. St. Mark xiv. 41.

^d See St. Luke ix. 51.

cinsmen after the flesh with His own position ; and explains what prevented His going up to Jerusalem with them, openly, now. It follows :—

but your time is alway ready.

Our SAVIOUR tells His 'Brethren' that they may visit Jerusalem at any time with perfect safety. They were not objects of public hatred, and secret conspiracy, like Himself.

The World cannot hate you ;

'For you urge the principles of the World, and 'the World will love its own'.'

but Me it hateth, because I testify of it, that the works thereof are evil.

'This is the secret of the World's hatred. The words, the deeds, the presence, the very thoughts of the good, are a witness which it will not endure, —as Cain could not endure Abel. 'He is grievous unto us, even to behold.' 'He abstaineth from our ways, as from filthiness'.'

The beloved Disciple in a certain place inquires, Wherefore Cain slew Abel? And the answer which he subjoins, forcibly recals the present place of his Gospel. 'Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous. Marvel not, my brethren, *if the World hate you*.'

* St. John xv. 19.

† Williams, quoting Wisdom ii. 15, 16.

‡ 1 St. John iii. 13. Consider also St. John xv. 18 and xvii. 14.

- 8 Go ye up unto this Feast: I go not up yet unto this Feast; for My time is not yet full come.

The meaning of these words was of course hid from the men to whom He spake. They supposed that our LORD was alluding only to the period at which it would please Him to go up to the Feast of Tabernacles; whereas all His words may have had a deeper meaning; and His concluding saying certainly had. They little knew the nature of the manifestation for which they expressed impatience, or suspected what was to follow at 'the fulness of Time.'

In the meanwhile, it is to be observed that our LORD here announces His actual intention of being present at the approaching solemnity. He does but declare that He proposes not to go up *yet*. Accordingly, it follows:

- 9 When He had said these words unto
10 them, He abode *still* in Galilee. But when His Brethren were gone up, then went He also up unto the Feast, not openly, but as it were in secret.

How long He staid in Galilee does not appear: for the space of a few days, it may be thought. 'The Brethren' having departed, our SAVIOUR followed, journeying privately; and when He reached the Capital, (which may well have been

on the first day of the Feast of Tabernacles,) He probably lived there for three days in perfect seclusion. See below, ver. 14.

Then the Jews sought Him at the Feast, 11 and said, Where is He?

Shewing that the memorable events which had attended our SAVIOUR's last visit to the Capital, (recorded in chapter v.,) had obtained such notoriety, that His presence was eagerly looked forward to at Jerusalem, and His arrival diligently inquired after, as often as the greater Festivals of the Church came round. 'The Jews'^b are the most diligent seekers after Him; who nevertheless cannot bring themselves to mention His hated Name: but, — 'Where is *He*?' they ask. The word is emphatic.

And there was much murmuring among 12 the people concerning Him: for some said, He is a good Man: others said, Nay; but He deceiveth the people.

In verse 43, below, it is also said that the populace were divided 'because of Him.' 'Some' there were, in fact, of 'the common people,' who 'hung upon' His wordsⁱ, — 'heard Him gladly'^k, — and came to Him 'early in the morning^l, in the Temple. 'Others' were the partizans of those

^b See below, the note on ver. 13.

^k St. Mark xii. 37.

ⁱ St. Luke xix. 48.

^l St. John viii. 2.

hypocritical Chief Priests, who finally compassed His death. These were taught to call Him a 'Deceiver,' to the very last^m.

- 13 Howbeit no man spake openly of Him for fear of the Jews.

Rather,—‘spake *freely* of Him:’ by which it is implied that some would have spoken in His favour, had they dared. ‘The Jews,’ in this place, as in so many others, is a phrase which indicates a certain section of the people,—that large and powerful body of Pharisees, whose enmity kept in awe Joseph of Arimathæaⁿ, and many other of the Rulers^o. See the note on St. John v. 15.

- 14 Now about the midst of the Feast JESUS went up into the Temple, and taught.

It was now the fourth day of the Festival; and our SAVIOUR, who was already in Jerusalem^p, made His appearance in the Temple,—no longer remaining hid, but revealing Himself openly, and assuming the office of a public Teacher.—Very astonishing must His remarks on their Sacred Books have appeared to the Jewish Rulers,—blinded though they were by prejudice, and hardened against conviction, by Sin: for *He* knew, as no one else could know, not only the recondite meanings of the Law and the Prophets, but also

^m See below, ver. 47. Also St. Matth. xxvii. 63.

ⁿ St. John xix. 38.

^o St. John xii. 42.

^p See above, on ver. 10.

what observations upon them would affect His auditory most. Accordingly, it follows:—

And the Jews marvelled, saying, How 15 knoweth this Man letters, having never learned ?

Rather,—‘How does this [person],’ (or ‘fellow,’) ‘know *the Scriptures*?’ The expression recurs in St. John v. 47, and 2 Tim. iii. 15.—These blind Teachers give little heed to His Divine Doctrine. Too proud to acknowledge their admiration of its sublimity, their very surprise at *what He says* is swallowed up in wonder as to *how He knows it*. They marvel ‘how’ such treasures of wisdom can dwell with One who has never studied in their schools.—(For it is not here implied that our SAVIOUR had never been a Learner; but only that He had attained His marvellous acquaintance with the Scriptures without having sat at the feet of any of their famous Rabbis.)—The inference was indeed sufficiently obvious,—namely, that He must have been divinely assisted: but this, they were not in a condition to perceive.

Our SAVIOUR, knowing the thoughts of their hearts, makes answer to their doubts; accounting for the admiration which His Teaching had occasioned them, and explaining the source of His Knowledge,—which was neither human, nor yet demoniacal, as some of them may have suspected.

JESUS answered them, and said, My Doc- 16 trine is not Mine, but His that sent Me.

This form of expression we have met with so repeatedly before, that it is almost needless to explain it further¹. ‘*Not Mine, but His that sent Me,*’—obviously conveys no denial that the Doctrine which our SAVIOUR delivered was His own, as God; but only the assertion that whatever He, the Eternal SON, had,—whether Doctrine, or any other thing,—He derived from the FATHER; inasmuch as He derived from *Him* His Essence, by virtue of that Eternal Generation of which we have already spoken particularly, elsewhere². It matters nothing, therefore, whether our SAVIOUR here speaks of Himself as God, or as Man. In either case He would have referred His Wisdom to the Eternal FATHER. As God,—because that relation whereby the SON receives all things of the FATHER, (whereas the FATHER receives nothing of any,) is the fundamental truth of the Gospel³. As Man,—because, although His own Divinity was doubtless the source of that Divine Wisdom whereby He spake, yet if He had failed to ascribe that Wisdom to the FATHER, a door would have been opened to misconception and error. Men might have doubted whether He was *Begotten* of the FATHER, and of *One Substance* with Him.

Concerning the superiority implied by the Mission here spoken of, (‘*His that sent Me,*’) hear what Cyril says :—‘Our SAVIOUR does not hereby

¹ See the notes on St. Matth. ix. 13, and St. John v. 30.

² See the notes on St. John v. 20, &c. ³ See St. John xx. 31.

represent Himself as inferior to the FATHER in honour: nor may His being 'sent' be thought of as if it were something servile,—true though it be that He took upon Himself the form of a Servant^t. He was 'sent' as a word from the mind, or a sun-beam^u from the sun;—things which are disposed to project themselves, so to speak, from that wherein they abide, by reason of their innate tendency to external manifestation: while yet they are naturally inherent in their respective sources, and inseparable from them. For when a word hath been uttered from the mind, or brightness from the sun, it is not supposed that the source which begat hath experienced loss or privation in respect of that which is begotten; but on the contrary, either is supposed still to remain in the other.'

In the verse before us then, our LORD by a few mysterious words explains the source of that Divine Knowledge in Himself which so perplexed His enemies. He straightway adds,—

If any man will do His Will, he shall know 17
of the Doctrine, whether it be of GOD, or
whether I speak of Myself.

Whereby it will be perceived that He further explains to His enemies the reason of their perplexity and unbelief. As though He had said,—
'If ye were faithful doers of the Will of Him that sent Me, ye would recognize My Doctrine to be His, likewise' . . . '*Of Myself*,' in this place, is evi-

^t Phil. ii. 7. ^u Cyril says, 'brightness,'—recalling Heb. i. 3.

dently put in opposition to that which is 'of God.' This is made plainer in the next verse.

These famous words may be looked upon not only as conveying a most gracious promise ; but also as embodying a great and most important precept,—namely, that the perception of Truth depends upon the practice of Virtue. It is a favourite maxim of the present day that increased Knowledge will bring with it growth in Godliness. Holy Scripture, at all events, exactly reverses the process. The way to 'know of the Doctrine, whether it be of God,' is — *to 'do His Will.'* And to this agree many other declarations of Holy Scripture*.

Literally,—'If any man wills,' that is, wishes, sincerely desires, to do God's Will, 'he shall know.' Thus, the Love of God has the promise of conducting to the Knowledge of God. The words are full of consolation: yet full of terror likewise; for they remind us that the 'rejection of true doctrine is a proof of an evil heart.' 'Understanding,' (says Augustine,) 'is the reward of Faith. Seek not to know, in order that thou mayest believe; but seek to believe, in order that thou mayest know.' God hath indissolubly linked together our intellectual and our moral nature; and will call us to account for our views and opinions, no less than for the actions of our lives. This is an unfashionable Doctrine, but it is *true*.

* See the places referred to in note (c) at page 183,—in the Commentary on St. John v. 44.

He that speaketh of himself seeketh his 18
own glory :

And he that seeketh his own glory, the same
'is a deceiver and an antichrist'. 'My Doctrine,'
(saith our SAVIOUR,) 'is not Mine, but His that
sent Me^a:' and the character of Him that seek-
eth the Glory of Him that sent Him, follows :

but He that seeketh His Glory that sent
Him, the Same is true, and no unrighteous-
ness is in Him.

'True,'— and therefore no deceiver of the
people^a, as some of them had said^b. 'Unrighte-
ousness' here stands for *Falsehood*, as in so many
other places of Scripture^c. It is further implied
that the Pharisees, who sought 'honour one of
another, and not the honour that cometh from
God only^d,' were both liars and unrighteous :
liars,—because they taught for doctrines the com-
mandments of men^e; unrighteous,—because they
were themselves transgressors. As it follows :

Did not Moses give you the Law, and yet 19
none of you keepeth the Law? Why go ye
about to kill Me?

^a 2 St. John ver. 7.

^a See above, ver. 16.

^a Consider 2 Cor. vi. 8 : 'as deceivers and yet true.'

^b See above, ver. 12.

^c Consider St. John iii. 21, (where see the note). Rom. i. 18 :
ii. 8. 1 Cor. xiii. 6. 2 Thess. ii. 12.

^d St. John v. 44.

^e St. Matth. xv. 3, 6, 9.

This is said with allusion to their alleged ground of offence against our LORD; namely, His supposed violation of the Mosaic Law^f. The argument is,—‘Ye profess honour for the Law of Moses. Why go ye about to kill Me, in whom is no unrighteousness; and thus prove by your actions that ye despise that Law which so strictly forbids murder?’

This was the question of Him ‘unto whom all hearts be open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid.’ Our LORD knew the murderous intentions which already filled the hearts of His enemies: He knew also the occasion of their hate. But this has been explained already in the note on verse 1.

Take notice that on a former occasion, also, the same Divine Speaker had asked His enemies a question very like the present. It was the Sabbath-day: He was about to restore a man which had a withered hand: the Scribes and Pharisees murmured at Him for doing what was unlawful on the Sabbath, and evidently designed nothing less than His destruction. Accordingly, He addressed to them the withering inquiry,—‘Is it lawful to do good on the Sabbath-days, or to do evil? to save life, *or to kill*?’

His enemies in the meantime ascribe to demoniacal possession His knowledge, *the reality* of which they are unable to deny:—

^f See St. John v. 16 and 18.

^g See St. Mark iii. 4, and the note there.

The people answered and said, Thou hast 20
a devil : who goeth about to kill Thee ?

Without condescending to notice their calumnious charge, or their question, — our SAVIOUR at once exposes the source of their malignity :—

JESUS answered and said unto them, I 21
have done one work, and ye all marvel.

‘Marvel’ is here thought to signify ‘are inflamed,’ ‘enrage yourselves.’—Take notice that He says not,—‘I restored to health on the Sabbath-day one hopelessly diseased.’ He simply describes the miraculous cure described in the 7th. chapter, as ‘a work’ which He had done,—thereby soothing the feelings of His excited auditory. It seems to be implied,—‘For this one work, although wrought for a sick man’s perfect restoration, ye persecute Me as if I were a malefactor, guilty of some monstrous crime. Ye pretend to be actuated only by jealousy for the honour of the Sabbath : yet might your regard even for *that* Institution well give way at the sight of One standing among you so manifestly invested with Divine Power as Myself. Ye marvel at *My* disregard of *Moses’* Law, inasmuch as I have done this *one* work : what then, think ye, must be the wrath of ALMIGHTY GOD against *yourselves*, for your *numberless* offences against *Him* ^h !’

Moses therefore gave unto you Circum- 22

^h From Cyril.

cision : not because it is of Moses, but of the Fathers ; and ye on the Sabbath-day circumcise a man. If a man on the Sabbath-day receive Circumcision, that the Law of Moses should not be broken ;

Not that the Law of Moses any where commands Circumcision on the Sabbath-day. In only one place does the ancient Lawgiver prescribe the observance of this sacred rite at all ; and there, he merely says of the 'man child,'— 'In the eighth day, the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised¹.' Our LORD, in verse 22, says 'Moses gave you Circumcision,' because the Jewish nation rested their continued observance of that sign of God's covenant with Abraham^k on the passage already quoted from the Law of Moses.

But the remarks thus offered, instead of removing, seem rather to increase the difficulty of the place ; the meaning of which will perhaps best appear from some such a paraphrase as this :—

'On the following account¹ Moses gave you Circumcision:—not, because it was any part of the Law which he received new from God ; but, on account of its being a Patriarchal Rite. His command to circumcise, amounts therefore only to his sanction of a Patriarchal precept. And yet,

¹ Levit. xii. 3.

^k Gen. xvii. 9 to 14.

¹ The learned reader should compare, for the construction, St. John v. 16, 18 : viii. 47 : x. 17 : xii. 18, 39. St. Matth. xiii. 12. 1 St. John iii. 1. The word 'therefore' must not be connected with the preceding verse.

though Circumcision is nothing more than this, you hesitate not to circumcise on the Sabbath-day,—thus transgressing the letter of the Fourth Commandment; and violating, (according to *your own* standard of strictness,) the oldest and most solemn of the Divine Institutions. If, then, ye yourselves practise a wounding of the flesh on the Sabbath-day, are ye angry at *Me*,—

are ye angry at *Me*, because I have made a man every whit whole on the Sabbath-day?

That is,—‘Now, if Circumcision, which is a *wounding*, and *partial mutilation* of the Body, must needs be performed even on the Sabbath, in order that the Law of *Moses* may be preserved inviolate,—are ye angry at *Me* because I made *the whole frame* of a man *healthy* on the same day^m?’ In which words, a contrast seems to be implied between Moses, who ‘verily was faithful in all his house, *as a servant* ;’ and ‘CHRIST, *as a Son* over His own Houseⁿ.’

Judge not according to the appearance, 24
but judge righteous judgment.

This does not mean, ‘judge not *according to what appears* ;’ as if the Divine Speaker implied that appearances are often deceptive. It means,—*Be not partial* judges; but learn to give an *impartial* judgment. Do not assent to what Moses requires, and yet charge *Me* with Sin: but regard

^m See above, the note on ver. 1.

ⁿ Heb. iii. 5, 6.

your own act, and Mine, with fair and impartial eyes; for the Law of the Sabbath is equally binding on us all. Ye consider that ye circumcise on the Sabbath-day by Moses' requirement. Be it so. Contrast therefore the bloody rite of Circumcision, practised on a Babe, with the glorious recovery of entire soundness in the case of one who had been diseased for 38 years. Look at the *work*, and judge fairly. Be not 'acceptors of persons.'

- 25 Then said some of them of Jerusalem, Is not this He, whom they seek to kill ?

Shewing that the intention of the Jewish Rulers was no secret to the people.

- 26 But, lo, He speaketh boldly, and they say nothing unto Him. Do the Rulers know indeed that this is the very CHRIST ?

Rather,—' Have the Rulers,' (that is, the members of the High Court of Sanhedrin,) ' perhaps really ascertained that this is indeed the MESSIAH ?' These words of the people convey a lively picture of the majesty and power with which our SAVIOUR must have spoken the preceding words; for His enemies are seen silent and confounded in His presence,—the presence of One whom, it was notorious, they only wanted to get into their power, in order to destroy. Here He is, and they are powerless ! Nay, so awe-struck do they appear, that a looker-on would suppose them *conscious* that MESSIAH stood before them. . . . Un-

belief however soon interferes to prevent the persons who threw out this suggestion, from accepting it for their own souls' health. It follows :

Howbeit we know this Man whence He is : 27

These reasoners knew that JESUS of Nazareth was the reputed son of Joseph, 'the carpenter,' and Mary his wedded wife. They might have found out however, had they pursued the investigation with real care, that Bethlehem had been the place of His actual Birth ; and it was within the limits of inquiry to ascertain that His Parents claimed to be of the House and Lineage of David°. All this however the inhabitants of Jerusalem were little likely to suspect. Their boast on every occasion was that they 'knew' whence CHRIST was ; that is, that they knew His Parentage and connexions[†]. A veil had been drawn over the early history of the Holy One,—a thicker veil than men, or even the Prince of Evil himself, could penetrate. The flight into Egypt and subsequent return to Nazareth,—the home (and probably the birth-place) of the Blessed Virgin Mary[‡], as well as of her saintly Husband,—must have effectually obliterated the memory of the Nativity at Bethlehem. Wonders had attended that event indeed ; but, on reflection, it will be felt that every part of this 'crying mystery,' (as Ignatius speaks concerning

° See St. Luke ii. 4, and the note.

† St. Matth. xiii. 55 to 57. St. Mark vi. 2, 3. St. Luke iv. 22. St. John vi. 42.

‡ St. Luke ii. 39.

the Incarnation,) had been 'wrought in the silence of God?.' The portentous Star and the arrival of the Magi at Jerusalem must have been the events of a single Day; while the visit and the offerings of those royal persons to the Infant 'King of the Jews,' must have been scarcely less secret a matter than the homage of the shepherd-swains which had preceded it. The Presentation in the Temple was altogether a private transaction. The very Murder of the Babes of Bethlehem must have been looked upon as little more than one of the many acts of cruelty which disgraced the latter days of Herod,—a thing to be condemned, deplored, and forgotten. In the meantime, the Holy Family disappeared from the Holy Land for a period: and when Joseph and Mary returned, it was not to the scene of their late singular distinction. They had come back to dwell in extreme poverty among the despised race to which they belonged; and in a city where no persons knew what had befallen them since their departure. Thirty troublous years had elapsed since then; and a fresh generation had sprung up. The title '*Jesus of Nazareth*' had now become the established appellation of our SAVIOUR*. Men were able therefore, with confidence, to say 'We know this Man whence He is!'—Consider below, verses 41, 42.—It follows:

* See the note on St. Luke ii. 35.

* Consider St. John i. 45, (where see the note,) xix. 19, St. Matth. xxi. 11, and especially Acts xxii. 8.

but when CHRIST cometh, no man knoweth whence He is.

They allude to the declaration of the prophet Micah, that the 'goings forth' of Him 'that is to be Ruler in Israel,' 'have been from of old, from everlasting': and again to those words of Isaiah respecting Him,—'Who shall declare His generation?' Hence, they reason thus: Concerning CHRIST, it will not be known whence He cometh, alluding to His Parentage;) but we know whence this Man cometh. Therefore He is not CHRIST. .. A melancholy specimen of perverse reasoning, truly! They had nothing to advance against the Holy One; nothing whereon to rest their unbelief; except the inconvenient fact that they knew or thought they knew) His origin^x. He proceeds to deprive them even of this excuse:—

Then cried Jesus in the Temple as He taught, saying, Ye both know Me, and ye know whence I am: and I am not come of Myself, but He that sent Me is true, whom ye know not.

He spake this with a loud Voice,—as if proclaiming the Truth in triumph. The sense is,—'Ye both know Me, and ye know whence I am.' So ye say: and in a certain sense, ye say truly. 'And yet, I came not of Myself; but He is faith-

^x Micah v. 2.

^y Isaiah liii. 8.

^z Compare the place with St. John ix. 29, where see the note.

ful and true that sent Me, — fulfilling His promises made to the Fathers. And *Him*, ye know not.' . . . Hence, it is implied that the enemies of CHRIST, in reality, *knew not whence He was*. And so our LORD says in another place⁷: adding, in express words, 'Ye neither know Me nor My FATHER⁸.' It follows:

29 But I know Him:

'The SON alone knoweth the FATHER, as being of one substance with Him; and He only can reveal Him.—The peculiar knowledge here spoken of implies a peculiar Generation from which it springs. For since the knowledge of the FATHER is peculiar to Him, as being from Him, then the being from Him is peculiar to Him also; that is, the being the true SON of God, by nature⁹.'

for I am from Him, and He hath sent Me.

'From whom I received My Essence by communication, from Him also received I this commission.' Thus He which begetteth sendeth, and He which is begotten is sent.'

'I know Him,' (saith CHRIST,) 'for I am from [or of] Him.' And because He is from [or of] the FATHER, therefore He is called by those of the Nicene Council, in their Creed, 'God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God.' In fact, they gathered those words of their Creed

⁷ See St. John viii. 14.

⁸ St. John viii. 19. See also St. John xvi. 3.

⁹ Williams, from Hilary.

in this place; but not immediately, for (as Bp. Pearson remarks) they were in some of the Original Creeds before. He goes on to explain: the FATHER is GOD, but not of GOD; Light, but not of Light. CHRIST is GOD, but of GOD; Light, but not of Light. There is no difference or inequality in the Nature or Essence, because the same in both; but the FATHER of our LORD JESUS CHRIST is that Essence of Himself, from none; CHRIST is the same, not of Himself but from Him^b.

By these words, then, the Eternal SON declares Himself to be the Only-Begotten of the FATHER, and asserts His Eternal Generation; as well as claims His Incarnation, and divine Apostleship^c. He had, in fact, now repeated the solemn doctrine which we met with in chap. v.; and accordingly, in the estimation of His hardened auditors, He was guilty of the same offence which is recorded of Him on that earlier occasion^d; and it attended by the same consequence. Namely:

Then they sought to take Him: but no 30
 one laid hands on Him, because His hour
 was not yet come.

That is,—It was divinely overruled that none should lay hands upon Him: because, 'His Hour' was yet future. Concerning that phrase, see above, note on ver. 6. 'He laid invisible hands on His power,' (remarks Williams); 'for it is He

^b Bp. Pearson. See the note on St. John xiv. 28.

See above, the note on ver. 16.

^d St. John v. 16, 18.

who hath said to the Sea,—Hitherto shalt thou come and no farther.’

- 31 And many of the people believed on Him, and said, When CHRIST cometh, will He do more miracles than these which this Man hath done ?

Shewing the nature of the expectations which were popularly entertained concerning MESSIAH. These men were wrought upon by the same considerations which prevailed with Nicodemus^e; the witness, namely, of ‘the works’ of CHRIST. See St. John v. 36.

They believed therefore with their heart, and confessed Him with their lips. In this manner were the Israel of God by slow degrees gathered into the Fold. A similar statement will be found in the ensuing chapter^f; and the reader is referred to the note on the last words of St. John ii. 11. In the meantime, the words which wrought so blessed an effect on ‘many out of the crowd,’ or ‘common people,’ did but harden the hearts of their Rulers. As it follows :

- 32 The Pharisees heard that the people murmured such things concerning Him; and the Pharisees and the Chief Priests sent officers to take Him.

It will be perceived by a comparison with other parts of Scripture that the persons spoken of were

^e St. John iii. 2.

^f See St. John viii. 30.

the Court of Sanhedrin^s. These were those 'blind guides,' whom our LORD rebuked so severely^h;—for such acts as the present, denouncing eight woes upon them. 'Woe unto you Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye shut up the Kingdom of Heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves, *neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in*¹.'

Then said JESUS unto them, Yet a little³³ while am I with you, and *then* I go unto Him that sent Me.

He says, '*Yet a little while*,'—because at the ensuing Passover He will suffer death. '*I go*,'—for CHRIST laid down His life by His own free will^k. 'Unto Him *that sent Me*,'—implying that He is 'Very God of very God;' 'the Only-Begotten SON of the FATHER.' . . . These words were possibly addressed to the Officers who were sent to apprehend the Holy One. The effect which our LORD's Discourse produced upon those men, we shall discover lower down, in verses 45, 46.

'Yet a little while am I with you.' Notice the tenderness of that plea, which our SAVIOUR so often urges: 'words' (says Williams) 'which make the strong man of wrath as a little child; the subject which, of all others, lies the nearest to human tears! And not only such as to soften enemies,

^s See St. John xi. 47, and Acts v. 21.

^h See Matth. xxiii. 16 and 24.

¹ St. Matth. xxiii. 13.

^k Consider St. John x. 18.

but, as Chrysostom observes, such as to make those who were in earnest more eager to hear Him, having but a little while to do so.' Consider the places at foot¹. In the meantime, He proceeds

34 Ye shall seek Me, and shall not find Me

This is at once a prophecy and a threat,—the after the close of our LORD's Ministry, when He had returned to the FATHER, they who now despise Him will too late discover their mistake, and be made conscious of their sin. According to that of Hosea—'They shall go with their flocks and with their herds to seek the LORD; but they shall not find Him; He hath withdrawn Himself from them'. Then, (as it had also been prophesied of old) 'though they shall cry unto Me, I will not hearken unto them'. And again,—'When ye spread for your hands, I will hide Mine eyes from you; yet when ye make many prayers, I will not hear'. 'Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out My Hand, and no man regarded I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh'. — The allusion may be specially to the time of the Siege, as Chrysostom suggests. Our SAVIOUR adds:

and where I am, *thither* ye cannot come.

He speaks of course of Heaven; and the same saying will be found repeated in chap. viii. 2

¹ See St. John xiii. 33: xiv. 19: xvi. 16.

² Hos. v. 6.

³ Jerem. xi. 11.

• Isaiah i. 15

⁴ Proverbs i. 24, 26.

alluded to by CHRIST Himself in chap. 3. A slight difference however is discovered between the two places. For it is not here *whither I go*, ye cannot come; but '*where*'—a saying which recalls the sublime assertion already considered in the note on chap. iii. 13. Moreover, it is observable that this is one of sayings of our LORD, (of which there are so many¹), which evidently obtains a different meaning in different places. The expression does not seem to signify the same thing here, and chap. xiii. 33. Here, it implies that our SAVIOUR was about to withdraw to that blessed region, whither His Saints should follow Him; indeed He went to prepare a place for their abode: (but whither the unbelieving and impenitent Jews, His enemies, would never arrive. Marriage Feast, the Great Supper, the Everlasting Habitations, the many Mansions, the Heavenly Jerusalem,—all this was not for them. Yea, this day, their descendants seek Him, yet do not find Him; and (strange to think!) it is precisely for the reason which their forefathers, in the next verse, suggest:—

Then said the Jews among themselves, 35
 Where will He go, that we shall not find Him?
 Will He go unto the dispersed among the Gentiles, and teach the Gentiles?

The meaning of the original seems to be rightly

¹ See the note on St. Matth. xix. 30.

given here. They ask,—Will CHRIST then go ‘to the Twelve Tribes in the dispersion,’ (or ‘scattered abroad,’ as we render the place^{*};) ‘and teach the Gentiles,’—literally, ‘the Greeks?’ In which words there seems to be a tacit allusion to the prophecy in Isaiah xlix. 6. They add:

- 36 What *manner of* saying is this that He said, Ye shall seek Me, and shall not find Me: and where I am, *thither* ye cannot come?

And thus ended the dialogue. Our attention is next invited to a memorable scene which took place in the Temple, four days later,—namely, on the eighth day of the Feast of Tabernacles.

- 37 In the last day, that great *day* of the Feast, JESUS stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto Me, and drink.

It was on the eighth^{*}, which had come to be regarded as the principal day of that Feast which the Jews observed with most veneration, and attended in largest numbers; a day observed with peculiar solemnity, as that which closed not only the Feast of Tabernacles, but also all their yearly festivals;—in the presence of a mighty concourse, therefore, it was, that the SAVIOUR of the World took His stand, and spake these words. It cannot be in vain recorded of Him that He ‘stood

^{*} St. James i. 1. Compare 1 St. Peter i. 1.

^{*} See Levit. xxiii. 36, 39, and Numb. xxix. 35.

cried. There must have been something ex-
 ingly solemn in that attitude, and that voice.
 'stood,' — where all might see: He 'cried,'
 at all might hear. 'If any man thirst,' was
 cry, — 'let him come unto Me and drink!'
 how must those words have recalled the ex-
 ation of the Prophet,—'Ho, every one that
 steth, come ye to the Waters, and he that hath
 noney; come ye, buy and eat^a!'

onsider that this was *the last time* that our
 D was ever to keep one of the three great
 ivals at Jerusalem; and it was *the last day*
 hat Festival. He 'cried' therefore that the
 ears might hear; and the careless ones be
 le attentive. It was a strong cry of reproof,
 arning, of invitation. 'Wisdom,' (as it is
 ten concerning CHRIST Himself,) 'crieth in
 chief place of concourse, in the openings of
 gates: in the City she uttereth her words,
 ng, How long ye simple ones will ye love
 plicity? and the scorers delight in their
 ning, and fools hate knowledge? Turn you at
 reproof: behold, *I will pour out My Spirit unto*
 x.' The words are almost a prophecy!

t is of *the Soul's Thirst* that our LORD here
 ks. He might have said 'Hunger,' had He
 ed,—as in St. John vi. 35; and the meaning
 ld have been the same. Why then is it Thirst,
 his place, and not Hunger? Plainly because

Compare St. John i. 35. ^a Is. lv. 1. ^x Prov. i. 20 to 23.

Thirst is the keener want: because, also, it is the manner of Scripture to discourse of *the Spirit* under the figure of *Water*; and our SAVIOUR was revealing Himself to His countrymen,—fetching water, as on this day they did, from ‘Siloa’s brook’ that flowed fast by the Oracle of God,^a and bringing it with pomp and ceremony into the Temple,—as *Himself* the Living Fountain,—the true source of spiritual refreshment to Israel.

Here then is a most gracious invitation, and most loving promise. ‘Let him come unto *Me*:’ there is the invitation. ‘Let him *drink*:’ there is the promise. To appreciate the blessedness of these words, we have but to call to mind the things which the soul most ardently longs for; as Happiness,—Love,—Knowledge,—Holiness: and further, to remember how the thirst for these becomes aggravated by Misfortune,—Bereavement,—Perplexity,—Falls. We know too that the things of Time cannot, were not meant, to satisfy those immense desires which will find their full gratification only in Eternity. Their office is to lead on to something higher, and purer, and better. The thirst of Happiness was meant to guide us to God’s Right Hand^a: and of Love, to Him who is ever with us^b: and of Knowledge, to the presence of Him who dwelleth in Light^c: and of Holiness, to Him who alone maketh holy^d. ‘Come

^a See St. John ix. 7.

^a Psalm xvi. 11.

^b Hebrews xiii. 6,—see the margin.

^c 1 Tim. vi. 16.

^d 1 St. Pet. i. 16.

o Me,' (it is therefore written,) 'all ye that
 our and are heavy laden, and I will give you
 e.' 'I am Alpha and Omega, the Beginning
 the End. I will give unto him that is athirst,
 he Fountain of the Water of Life freely.' 'If
 man thirst, let him come unto *Me*, and drink!'
 . partial fulfilment, then, these words would
 e had at the time when they were spoken. A
 larger fulfilment they will have obtained at the
 st of Pentecost. But their entire scope belongs
 hat period, yet future, when the 'Spirit and
 Bride' will say, 'Come^g:' when 'a pure river
 Water of Life, clear as crystal,' will be seen
 oceeding out of the Throne of God and of the
 IB^h. There, (in 'that great City, the Holy
 asalem,') the Saints of God shall 'hunger no
 e, *neither thirst any more*; neither shall the
 light on them, nor any heat. For the LAMB
 ch is in the midst of the Throne shall *lead them*
 o *living fountains of Waters*; and God shall
 e away all tears from their eyesⁱ!

He that believeth on Me, as the Scripture 38
 h said, out of his belly shall flow rivers
 living Water.

It is well known that nowhere in the Bible are
 se words to be found; and it is not by any
 ans likely that we ought to explain the passage
 h Chrysostom and others,—'He that believeth

St. Matth. xi. 28. ^f Rev. xxi. 6. ^g Consider Rev. xxii. 17.
 Rev. xxii. 1. ⁱ Rev. vii. 16, 17.

on Me as,' (that is, 'in conformity with what,') 'the Scripture hath said;' making the words which follow, a promise which had been reserved for the New Covenant. The true meaning of our LORD's words is, that as many of the goodly fellowship of the Prophets as have discoursed in dark, deep phrase, of the largeness of spiritual endowments,—that free outpouring and indwelling, even to overflowing, of the SPIRIT, which was to mark the reign of MESSIAH^k;—all these, more or less implicitly, have said the thing which He by whose Spirit they spake^l here attributes to them. The language used by our LORD on this occasion seems therefore to be as nearly as possible tantamount to that which He used in addressing the Woman of Samaria;—'Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him *a well of water springing up into Everlasting Life*^m.' In both places it is distinctly marked not only that he that drinketh shall have no lack for evermore; but that he shall have in himself a well-spring of blessedness,—derived indeed from Him with whom all fulness dwells; yet flowing away in rivers even from the earthen vessel to which it had been imparted. 'The manner of our SAVIOUR's expression implieth that the SPIRIT should be poured

^k As Is. xii. 3: xxxv. 6, 7: xli. 18: xliii. 19: xliv. 3: lv. 1: lviii. 11. Ezek. xxxix. 29. Joel ii. 28, 29. Zech. xii. 10: xiv. 8, 16, &c.

^l 1 St. Peter i. 11.

^m St. John iv. 13, 14.

out in such a plentiful measure as would be not only sufficient to satiate the souls of them that thirsted after it, but in a manner overflow to the Salvation of others*.' Hence, that word of the Apostle,—‘As every one hath received the gift, so let him ministerⁿ.’ . . . The ‘belly,’ in this place, of course denotes the whole ‘*inner man*.’

And take notice that this is one of the occasions, (so much more numerous than is supposed,) when the Evangelist himself comes forward to prevent mistake, or misconception: adding,

(But this spake He of the Spirit, which³⁹ they that believe on Him should receive:

St. John says,—Seek not for this saying of our LORD, (thine and mine,) in any special place of the Old Testament. Thou wilt strive to discover this particular passage, all in vain: for ‘this spake He of the Spirit, which they that believe on Him should receive;’ ‘the streams whereof shall make glad the City of God.’

Take notice however that ‘each is filled according to the size of that vessel of Faith which each brings to the Fountain. If the love of the World dwelleth in thee, there is no room in thee for the love of God. Thou art a vessel, but thou art full. Pour forth what thou hast, that thou mayest receive that which thou hast not. Pour forth the love of the World that thou mayest be filled with

* Dr. Jackson.

ⁿ 1 St. Peter iv. 10.

• Ps. xlv. 4.

the love of God. Each according to his thirst, shall find drink in God^p.—St. John adds, for the HOLY GHOST was not yet *given*; because that JESUS was not yet glorified.)

The allusion here to the great Pentecostal effusion^q is unmistakable. 'The Spirit' was a gift yet future,—something which believers '*should receive*.' Hence it is said '*for the HOLY GHOST was not yet given*.' The waters of Life would not flow till the Rock was smitten. It is the manner of St. John in this way to *allude* to events which he yet does not describe^r.

Take notice also of that expression—'JESUS was not yet glorified.' It is thus that not only St. John, but our SAVIOUR Himself, elsewhere speaks of His Triumph over Death, and His subsequent exaltation to the Right Hand of God^s. Moreover, that out-pouring of the Spirit, which was to take place ten days after our LORD's Ascension into Heaven, He expressly makes *dependent* on His Ascension, 'It is expedient for you that I go away,' (He said to His sorrowing Disciples;) 'for if I go not away, the COMFORTER *will not come* unto you; but if I *depart*, I will send Him unto you^t.' This sequence

^p Williams, quoting Augustine and Ludolph. ^q Acts ii. 1 to 4.

^r As, to the institution of Baptism in chap. iii., and of the LORD's Supper in chap. vi.: to the Ascension, in chap. vi. 62 and xx. 17. In this place, to the Day of Pentecost.

^s St. John xii. 16, (with which compare xiv. 26,) and xii. 23, (with which compare xvii. 1 and 5.) Also St. John xiii. 32. And consider such places as the following: St. Luke xxiv. 26. Rom. viii. 17. 1 St. Peter i. 11: iv. 13: v. 1, &c. ^t St. John xvi. 7.

and order is marked also in the lxviiith Psalm:—
 'Thou hast ascended on high, Thou hast led captivity captive: *Thou hast received gifts for men*.'—
 Hence the word 'Because,' in the text.

But verse 39 is parenthetical and explanatory. In the next verse we are informed what was the effect produced on our LORD's auditory by the very remarkable sayings in verses 37 and 38.

Many of the people therefore, when they 40 heard this saying, said, Of a truth this is the Prophet.

Referring to the famous prediction in Deuteronomy xviii. 15, 18,—of a Prophet like unto Moses which God should raise up, in the latter days. Compare St. John i. 21, and the note there.

Others said, This is the CHRIST. 41

Hazarding a yet bolder confession: for it is found to have been a different one from the other^x.

But some said, Shall CHRIST come out of Galilee?

'Ever stifling, by the Scripture itself, the yearnings of Faith.' A true sample this, of the World's wisdom in things spiritual,—knowing so much, yet knowing so little! Sufficiently clever in suggesting technical difficulties; not skilful enough to suggest their solution. Surely the dawn of the truth was discoverable even from Isaiah ix. 1, 2.

[■] Ps. lxviii. 18, quoted in Eph. iv. 7 to 12. See Acts ii. 33.

^x St. John i. 20.

- 42 Hath not the Scripture said, That CHRIST cometh of the seed of David, and out of the town of Bethlehem, where David was ?

The objection thus raised against our LORD is a striking confirmation of the truth of what was offered above in the note on ver. 27 ; for it is quite evident that a belief had firmly obtained that 'JESUS of Nazareth' was *a native* of Galilee. Neither does it seem to have been generally known that the Husband of the Blessed Virgin claimed to be of 'the House and Lineage of David.'—The prophecies which had gone before respecting the Royal descent⁷ and Birth-place of MESSIAH⁸, were in the meantime, a matter of notoriety⁹.—'Bethlehem, *where David was*,' seems to be said to distinguish this Bethlehem from another in the Tribe of Zabulon. See the note on St. Matthew ii. 5.

- 43 So there was a division among the people because of Him.

'His own prophecy began already to be fulfilled, that He came to send Division upon Earth: though God is not the Author of Confusion but of Peace^b.' See also St. John ix. 16, x. 19, and xii. 42.

- 44 And some of them would have taken Him ; but no man laid hands on Him.

The allusion does not seem to be to those

⁷ 2 Sam. vii. 12, Jer. xxiii. 5, 6 : xxxiii. 15, 16. Ps. cxxxii. 11, &c.

⁸ Micah v. 2. ⁹ Acts ii. 30, Rom. i. 3, &c. Also St. Matth. ii. 6.

^b Williams, quoting St. Luke xii. 51. 1 Cor. xiv. 33.

officers who were despatched in ver. 32 : for compare ver. 30. There doubtless was a large party of miscreants in Jerusalem, completely at the disposal of the Chief Priests and Pharisees; and who, at this very time, were ripe for those atrocities which six months after they perpetrated with greediness^c. But their purpose was overruled for the present by an unseen Arm; because the Hour appointed in the Divine Counsels for CHRIST'S Death, was not yet come. See above, on ver. 30.

In the meantime, the officers who (as we read in ver. 32) were despatched to apprehend the Holy One, return; and from the general tenor of all that follows, it would seem as if the Sanhedrin, (consisting of the Chief Priests and Pharisees,) were now assembled in Council.

Then came the officers to the chief 45
Priests and Pharisees; and they said unto
them, Why have ye not brought Him?
The officers answered, Never man spake 46
like this Man.

Take notice that they complain neither of want of opportunity, nor fear of the populace, as on a subsequent occasion they might have done^d. His innocence has disarmed them, and the majesty of His Discourse has made them afraid. 'Never at any time so spake man as this Man speaketh.'

^c Consider St. Matth. xxvii. 20. St. Mark xv. 11.

^d St. Luke xix. 47, 48.

The Doctrine, so unearthly: the eloquence, so convincing: the aspect, so awful: the manner, so divine. It is as if they said,—He is not Man, but God! In short, they prefer braving the anger of their employers to incurring the danger of laying violent hands on such a Being. Nay, they are converted into Apostles; and come back to the Sanhedrin,—preaching CHRIST!

- 47 Then answered them the Pharisees, Are ye also deceived?

For they wickedly called CHRIST a ‘Deceiver,’—that is ‘an Impostor^e.’ They seek to convince their servants of the error of believing in CHRIST, by appealing to the estimation in which He was held by their own learned Body, (who perforce, it is implied, must be the best judges of such a matter;) asking with scorn,—

- 48 Have any of the Rulers or of the Pharisees believed on Him? But this people who knoweth not the Law are cursed.

This was their customary way of denouncing their unlearned brethren. Take notice however that even ‘among the chief Rulers, many believed’ in JESUS CHRIST already; ‘but because of the Pharisees, they did not confess Him, lest they should be put out of the Synagogue^f.’ The faith of Jairus^g, of Joseph of Arimathæa, and perhaps of more^h who

* See above, on ver. 12.

^f St. John xii. 42: see xix. 38.

^g Compare St. Mark v. 22 with St. Matth. ix. 18.

^h Consider St. Luke xiv. 1 and xviii. 18.

are mentioned in the Gospel, remained therefore yet a secret. The well-known name of a third member of the Sanhedrin follows. He was present ; and felt constrained to speak.

Nicodemus saith unto them, (he that 50 came to JESUS by night, being one of them,) Doth our Law judge *any* man, before it hear him, and know what he doeth ?

Concerning Nicodemus, who was mentioned at first as a secret Disciple of CHRIST, and who now comes forward as His open Apologist,—(hereafter to shew himself a bold Confessor likewise,)—the reader is referred to the note on St. John iii. 2 : and he is also requested to peruse the note on St. John iv. 46.—‘ Wisely appealing to their own Law^l, and secretly pleased to find the officers so affected with awe, Nicodemus hoped that the Rulers themselves might, in like manner, be overcome by the presence of CHRIST^k.’ Take notice that, instead of argument, certain members of their assembly assail their brother counsellor with insult : asking, in derision, if they may attribute his taking of our LORD’s part, to the bond of a common Country.

They answered and said unto him, Art 52 thou also of Galilee ? Search, and look : for out of Galilee ariseth no prophet.

Their taunt, in the original, runs thus,—‘ Surely,

^l To such places as Exod. xxiii. 1. Levit. xix. 15. Deut. i. 17 : xix. 15.

^k Williams.

thou too art not of Galilee, [art thou?'] 'Search and see,' they add; that is, — 'Search the Scriptures¹,' and notice what is there written: for it is nowhere foretold 'that the Prophet is to arise² out of Galilee;' in other words, 'is to be born' there.

This is certainly what the speakers meant. They were far too learned not to know that many of 'the goodly fellowship of the prophets' had been Galilæans, — as Elijah and Elisha, Jonah, Amos, Hosea, and Nahum. — In the meantime, the remonstrance of Nicodemus is found to have been attended with the result which he must have mainly intended; for the Council evidently broke up, — as usual with them, after the evening daily sacrifice. Accordingly, we read:

53 And every man went unto his own house.

But 'JESUS' (it is added,) 'went unto the Mount of Olives.' Why then are those words severed from their context, and made the commencement of a new chapter³? The balance of the sentence is thereby destroyed; the affecting contrast between its two members, lost; and only half the Evangelist's meaning conveyed. What God had so joined together should not have been put asunder.

¹ Compare St. John v. 39.

² The learned reader will perceive that this is one of the cases where the Vulgate discharges the office of a Commentary.

³ See the foot-note (b) on St. Mark ix. 1.

A

PLAIN COMMENTARY

ON THE EIGHTH CHAPTER OF

St. John's Gospel.

1 CHRIST delivereth the woman taken in adultery. 12 He preacheth Himself the Light of the World, and justifieth His doctrine: 33 answereth the Jews that boasted of Abraham, 59 and conceyeth Himself from their cruelty.

VIII. JESUS went unto the mount of Olives.

Concerning the import of these few words, enough has been said at the close of the preceding chapter,—to which, in fact, they properly belong. It will be remembered that the time spoken of is ‘the last day, that great day of the Feast’ of Tabernacles,—a Festival which marked the close of the Sacred Year; and which, in this place, indicates the commencement of the last half-year of our LORD’s Ministry.

And early in the morning He came again into the Temple, and all the people came into Him; and He sat down, and taught them. And the Scribes and Pharisees brought into Him a woman taken in adultery; and when they had set her in the midst, they

say unto Him, Master, this woman was taken in adultery, in the very act.

Concerning the position given to the accused person, compare Acts iv. 7. It should be observed that her accusers belonged to the class which occupies such prominent notice in St. Matthew **xxiii^d**.

- 5 Now Moses in the law commanded us, that such should be stoned: but what sayest Thou?

‘Thou,—who pretendest to have an authority greater than that of Moses?’

It is remarkable that this command is not found in the Pentateuch; which however mentions, that stoning should be the punishment for a *betrothed* person^b. It must therefore have been the ancient gloss of the Scribes on Leviticus **xx. 10**,—which only declares that the guilty parties shall ‘be put to death;’ without specifying how. This mode of punishing adultery appears however to be alluded to in Ezekiel **xvi. 38, 40**.

- 6 This they said, tempting Him, that they might have to accuse Him.

By which last words, the beloved Disciple explains the design of these sinful men in bringing the case of the woman taken in adultery before the Holy One. Remarkable indeed is the *necess*

^a Lonsdale and Hale; referring to St. Matth. **v. 21, 22: 28: 31, 32, &c.: xii. 8: xix. 9.**

^b See Deut. **xxii. 24.**

any inference from what is here revealed of their conduct and intentions: for it shews how just an opinion they had conceived of our SAVIOUR'S leniency. What else was the difficulty to which they exposed Him? Why should He not have simply confirmed Moses' sentence, and so dismissed the case? But they had learned, by the experience of His past acts and sayings, that it was improbable He would do so. 'It was unlike His mercies to condemn; yet, if He did not, they would charge Him as a transgressor of the Law. In the same net which they hid privily, is their net taken^c,'—as we shall presently discover.

but JESUS stooped down, and with *His* finger wrote on the ground, *as though He heard them not*.

Take notice that the words in italics ('*as though He heard them not*') form no part of the sacred record. They are not the words of Inspiration; but the pious suggestion of some very ancient reader, who inscribed them in the margin of his copy of St. John's Gospel: and the Church has so far respected them, as to retain them to this day,—distinguished from the words of the Evangelist by the difference of type.

The commentary thus supplied is indeed too valuable to be lost sight of. We read that our SAVIOUR was sitting at early morning in the temple, and that He was teaching a multitude of

^c Williams, quoting Ps. ix. 15.

persons. While thus engaged,—the hour and the place, the solemn Season and His Divine occupation, all suggesting thoughts of holiness and acts of forbearance, and words of love,—the Scribes and Pharisees suddenly enter; and disturb the flow of His heavenly teaching by a filthy accusation, and that confusion and excitement which are inseparable from public transactions of a semi-judicial nature like the present. Here was the accused and her many accusers,—powerful men attended by their servants and followers, as well as by a noisy rabble,—all crowding into the SAVIOUR'S presence, and challenging His notice. Very striking therefore must have appeared the gesture of One who, at such a moment, could stoop down, and with His finger trace words up the dusty floor, as if heedless of what they were saying. His action must truly have been though He heard them not.' Viewed as conveying a lesson to ourselves, it seems to say—'Turn away mine eyes, lest they behold vanity^d.'

What, however, may have been our Blessed SAVIOUR'S purpose and meaning in thus 'stooping down?' and what may He be supposed to have 'written on the ground?' The matter is certainly obscure and difficult; but a clue to the mystery seems discoverable from a careful study of the ancient law concerning the punishment of an adulteress,—that law which was delivered to Moses by CHRIST Himself. A few suggest

^d Ps. cxix. 37.

ON ST. JOHN'S GOSPEL.

subject will, however, be most conveniently read to the reader in a collected form, when reached the end of the present narrative. Now, the long note on the concluding words 9.

accusers of the woman, in the meantime, to be so put off. They persevere in their and will have an answer.

When they continued asking Him, He stood up Himself, and said unto them, He without sin among you, let him first stone at her.)

For, 'Let him that is without sin among the first to cast his stone at her : ' for the Law prescribed death by stoning, commanded likewise that ' the hands of the witnesses be first upon ' the guilty one to put him to death, ' and afterwards the hand of all the people. ' It would seem as if these accusers had placed themselves before the great Judge, prepared to execute the sentence of the Law, and armed with the instruments of destruction.

Again He stooped down, and wrote on the ground. And they which heard *it*, 9 convicted by *their own* conscience, went out one by one, beginning at the last even unto the last :

How terrible a picture, by the way, of moral

* Deut. xiii. 9: xvii. 5 to 7.

degradation! Can we read such things, and then wonder at the severity of our LORD's denunciations pronounced against these very men?[†] St. Matthew xii. 39 may therefore be taken literally! Consider also St. James iv. 4.

Take notice that He has neither condemned the Woman, nor yet absolved her. He has, in fact, not answered the question of His hypocritical assailants at all; and yet He has defeated their malice, and ridded Himself of their molestation. Nay, He sends them away covered with shame; and yet it is not He that has condemned them, but they have been made to condemn themselves.

and JESUS was left alone, and the Woman standing in the midst.

In the midst, probably, of that circle of attentive listeners whom our LORD was addressing when these hypocrites entered. And thus they stood,—‘Misery and Mercy,—the pitiable one and He that is Pity itself,—confronting each other.’ ‘It was a fearful sentence, to stand before Him and to be forgiven[‡]!’ ‘There is mercy with Thee: therefore shalt Thou be feared!’

What, in the meantime, is to be said in the way of *interpretation* of the striking narrative which precedes? Observe that the matter in hand was the trial of a woman taken in adultery: but our

[†] See all St. Matth. xxiii., especially ver. 27, 28.

[‡] Augustine.

[‡] Williams.

[‡] Ps. cxxx. 4.

and sees fit to treat the case as if it were what called in the Law, 'the trial of Jealousy.' This by the bitter water (or water of conviction^k) a species of ordeal, intended by the ALMIGHTY for the vindication of innocence, and the conviction of guilt. There is reason for believing that, common with many other enactments of the same Law, it had fallen into practical disuse at that time,—in consequence of the great prevalence of the special sin against which it was directed: He who gave the Law is here found to enforce it, and *that*, after a divine and unexampled, as well as a wholly unexpected manner.

It is worth observing that, according to the Jewish tradition and belief, this test proved effectual only in the case of the woman whose husband was himself innocent of the crime with which he charged his wife. If *he* were just as guilty as herself, no conviction followed. This circumstance helps to explain the merciful treatment which the 'woman taken in adultery' meets with at our LORD's hands. It will be found that He exactly reverses the process which her accusers intended; and treats *her* as the accused party. Let the language of Numbers v. 16 to 24 be carefully considered; and then, the truth of what has been asserted will once appear. We read:—'The priest shall bring her near,' (that is, the accused woman,) 'and set her before the LORD: and . . . take holy water in

So interpreted by the Septuagint in Numb. v. 18, 19, 23, 24.

an earthen vessel; and of the dust that is in the floor of the tabernacle the priest shall take, and put it into the water.' 'And the priest shall hold in his hand the bitter water that causeth the curse; and . . . shall charge her by an oath, and say unto the woman, If no man have lain with thee, thou shalt be free from this bitter water that causeth the curse: but if thou hast gone aside to another man instead of thine husband, and if thou be defiled . . . then the priest shall charge the woman with an oath of cursing,' (which follows :) 'and the woman shall say, Amen, amen. And the priest shall write these curses in a book, and he shall blot them out with the bitter water¹; and he shall cause the woman to drink the bitter water, and it shall causeth the curse. And the water that causeth the curse shall enter into her, and become bitter.' Thereupon, if the woman were guilty, she would immediately fall under a visible penalty; her behaviour testifying terribly to her sin. If innocent, nothing would follow.—Such were the provisions of the Law.

And now, with all this before us, who sees that our Blessed SAVIOUR has been dealing with these adulterous hypocrites exactly as if *they* had been the culprits, instead of the wretched woman whom they had dragged into His presence?

Terribly 'near' to the incarnate JEHOVAH they themselves had been brought. Before Him, and

¹ That is, he was to write the curse so superficially, that pouring water over it the writing was to disappear.

been 'set;' and doubtless, when He stooped down and wrote upon the ground, it was a bitter sentence against the adulterer and adulteress which He wrote in 'the dust of the floor of the tabernacle.' We have but to assume that the words which He had thus traced on the ground, had the connexion with the words which He uttered from His lips, and He will indeed have 'taken of the dust and put it on the water,' and 'caused him to drink of the bitter water which causeth the curse!'

For, when by His Divine Spirit our Great High Priest addressed Himself to these adulterers,—what did He, but, (in the very phrase of the apostle,) present them with living water^m, '*in an then vessel*;'—an expression which St. Paul explains to denote the 'earthly tabernacle' of the *synagogue*? Did not the Great Priest of the Temple then charge these men with an oath of cursing; saying, '*If ye have not gone aside to uncleanness, ye are free from this bitter water; but if ye have gone aside to others instead of your wives, and if ye be defiled*,'—On which alternative being pressed to them, did they not, self-convicted, go one by one? And what was this, but themselves pronouncing the acquittal of the sinful man for whose condemnation they were, or condemned to be, so impatient? for, according to

So the ancient Greek version renders 'holy water' in Numb. 1.

^m 2 Cor. iv. 7, and v. 1.

their traditional belief of what happened in such cases, (as already explained,) she must perforce have submitted to the ordeal with impunity.

Meanwhile, our LORD is found to have resumed His former attitude and occupation. Did He continue writing on the ground the curses of the adulteress; making the 'floor of the Tabernacle' His 'book?' It seems likely that He did so: and if He did, it would be no more than a mere matter of fact that in the case of the sinful woman before Him, He also *blotted out* those curses by her acquittal; and, as one may say, with that very bitter water too which He had compelled her accusers to drink. For it follows:

- 10 When JESUS had lifted up Himself, and saw none but the woman, He said unto her, Woman, where are those thine accusers? hath no man condemned thee?

'Hath no one remained to demand the enforcement of the Law against thee?'

- 11 She said, No man, LORD. And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more.

Our LORD says not, 'Neither do I condemn *sin*;' but 'Neither do I condemn *thee*.' Notice also that He speaks of a judicial sentence—*that* judicial sentence which He first inquired no one else had enforced against the woman.

On being told that no man had done this, He declines, on this occasion, to assume the judicial office^p. In the words of the heading of the chapter, He simply '*delivereth the Woman.*' The sin of Adultery He heavily condemns^q, but this individual offender He is mercifully pleased to acquit,—an instance of His clemency, which, like His forgiveness of the repentant malefactor, cannot but prove a source of unspeakable consolation to us all.

Strange, that this entire history, (from chap. vii. ver. 53 to ver. 11 of the present chapter inclusive,) should be found wanting in so many ancient manuscripts of the Gospels! The inference is obvious,—namely, either that men must have suspected the authenticity of the passage, or that they must have dreaded lest so merciful a sentence should prove productive of evil in the Church of CHRIST. But who and what are *we* that we should presume thus to judge of the Work of the SPIRIT? 'It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth?' What know we of this woman's age, history, character, mind, heart? The reader is invited to refer to some remarks on this subject which have been already offered in the note on St. John iv. 20.

The chief lessons derivable from the present narrative seem to be (1st), one of solemn warning to ourselves against the condemnation of others;

^p So also in St. Luke xii. 13, 14.

^q As in St. Matth. v. 27 to 32.

^r Rom. viii. 33, 34.

—(2nd), one of encouragement to the great of offenders, never to despair of forgiveness (3rd), one of exhortation to all; for we are reminded that the very condition of mercy, ‘*sin no more.*’ Compare St. John v. 14.—occasion of’ this woman, the Holy One she (as is said in the heading of St. Luke vii.) ‘he is a friend to sinners, not to maintain the sins, but to forgive them their sins, upon Faith and Repentance.’

Whether what follows took place at the time as what precedes, does not appear. The was the same,—as we learn from ver. 20; and are some allusions in our LORD’s discourse recal the scene of the preceding incident on the whole it seems to belong to another sion; for observe, it begins ‘Then spake *again* unto them.’ It may have occurred what later in the same day.

- 12 Then spake JESUS again unto them, I am the Light of the World: followeth Me shall not walk in darkness but shall have the Light of Life.

‘The Light of the World!’ This title assumes in the manner of the Doctors nation^a; with a propriety of which they have no conception, and with a sublimity passing even our own assisted powers of

^a See the notes on St. John iii. 10.

the chief thing to be noticed is, that He claims to Himself one of the well-known appellations of the MESSIAH. Consider Isaiah 6, xlix. 6, and lx. 3; and see the end of the verse on St. John x. 24.

Some remarks will be found upon this highly significant title, which our SAVIOUR claims on many occasions, in the Commentary on St. John 5, to which the reader is accordingly referred: He is requested to take notice that the aspect of this appellation there enlarged upon, is not precisely the aspect which gives it such peculiar propriety *here*. In *this* place it seems to have reference to what has immediately gone before. Our SAVIOUR had been making manifest the filthy wickedness of the Scribes and Pharisees: now, *atsoever doth make manifest is Light*.* See what has been said on the subject of 'Darkness' in the note on St. John xii. 35; and compare the same place with St. John xii. 46, 35, and 36.

The Pharisees therefore said unto Him, 13
 you bearest record of Thyself; Thy record
 is not true.

These sinful men, (members of the sect already mentioned in ver. 3, but probably not the same individuals,) allude to a well-known precept of the Law, which allowed not that any should bear witness for himself. In His Discourse on a former occasion, our SAVIOUR had anticipated

* Eph. v. 13. Consider verses 8 to 14.

Referring to Deuteronomy xvii. 6, and xix. 15.

- 18 I am One that bear witness of Myself, and the FATHER that sent Me beareth witness of Me.

When our LORD says that the FATHER bears witness of Him, He means chiefly by the miraculous Works which the FATHER gave the SON to do: as it is elsewhere said,—‘The Works which the FATHER hath given Me to finish, the same Works that I do, *bear witness of Me, that the FATHER hath sent Me*.’ And again, ‘the FATHER that dwelleth in Me, He doeth the Works^a.’ The twofold testimony therefore to which our SAVIOUR here appeals is (1st), His own declarations concerning Himself: (2ndly), His Miracles, which were a proof that the FATHER was with Him. And herein we have the witness of *two* Persons; because ‘there is one Person of the FATHER, another of the SON.’

This will be at once felt to be a surprising method of reasoning. The enemies of CHRIST would of course deny the validity of the argument. His works (they would say) were inseparable from Himself: and His own witness in such a case, (as they had already declared^b), was inadmissible.—We are reminded of a remark already elsewhere offered, that the Divine Logic is always perplexing. It has a lofty marvellousness of its

^a St. John v. 36. Compare also x. 37, 38 and xiv. 10, 11.

^b St. John xiv. 10.

See above, ver. 13.

n; and reminds Faith herself that she has many
sons yet to learn. Above all, it convinces her
a little she understands that Scripture for which
she professes so great a reverence. CHRIST un-
ds the Book,—nay, His very Apostles unfold
—and straightway their remarks are unlooked
for; their reasoning improbable^d, their comment
earthly^e. Things little suspected are found to
lying on the surface of that familiar page; and
we are driven to theories of Allusion and Accom-
modation in excuse and apology for the blessed
speakers, but in reality to cover our own igno-
rance of the Book of Life. See what has been
ready offered on this subject in the notes on
Mark xii. 27, and St. Luke xiv. 6.

Concerning the place in Deuteronomy referred
to in ver. 17, we will but suggest (in the words
of a pious writer) ‘that those words of the Law
respecting the two witnesses, do refer to the
doctrine of the Trinity, and the twofold Witness
the FATHER and the SON, before the HOLY
GHOST was yet given, who was the Third Witness.
But, on referring to the passage in Deuteronomy,
we find that it is said ‘two or three witnesses’:
and may not the words ‘or three’ be here dropped

As in St. Luke xvii. 32: St. Matth. ii. 23, and in 2 Cor. viii.
Heb. iv. 4.

As in St. Mark xii. 27, (where see the note,) and in 1 Cor. x.
6.

As in this place: St. Matth. viii. 17, and in Rom. x. 4 to 10:
1 iv. 21 to 31: 1 Cor. ix. 9 to 11: Heb. ii. 5 to 9.

Deut. xix. 15.

in our LORD's statement for the reason assigned; namely, that the Third Witness had not yet been brought forward?^s Certain it is that on the other occasion when our SAVIOUR referred to the same enactment, (namely in St. Matthew xviii. 16.) He failed not to notice the exact terms in which it was originally delivered.—'How' (asks the greatest of the Fathers) 'must we understand the precept—'By the mouth of two or three witnesses, shall every word be established,' except as an intimation of the mystery of the Trinity, in which is perpetual stability of Truth^h?'

Whatever may be thought of this suggestion, it is a plain matter of fact that our LORD's reasoning is such as we have described it to have been. Moreover, whether satisfactory to His audience or not, it was evidently meant to be conclusive. Nothing remains, therefore, but that we should meditate upon it humbly and reverently. The only rejoinder which His enemies ventured to make in reply, cannot find place on *our* lips.

19 Then said they unto Him, Where is Thy FATHER ?

Thus do they immediately afford evidence of that carnal judgment with which our SAVIOUR had charged them in ver. 15ⁱ. They suppose that He speaks of a human Parent; just as, in ver. 32, they suppose that He speaks of deliver-

^s Williams. Consider 1 St. John v. 6 to 9.

^h Augustine.

ⁱ Augustine.

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ce from bodily servitude ; and in ver. 53, of
liverance from temporal Death. The present
in fact, rather a scoff than a question ; and
r LORD treats it accordingly.

SUS answered, Ye neither know Me, nor
y FATHER :

As if He said,—Ye ask Where is My FA-
ER? as if ye knew *Me* already, and I were
hing else but what ye see. But ye know Me
; and therefore I tell you nothing of My FA-
ER. Ye think Me indeed a mere Man, and
refore among men look for My FATHER. But
smuch as I am different altogether, according
My seen and unsean natures, and speak of My
FATHER in the hidden sense according to My hid-
nature ; it is plain that ye must first know
, and then ye will know My FATHER¹.

re had known Me, ye should have known
r FATHER also.

Which expression, of course, implies Unity of
stance : for it cannot properly be said of any
, that, in knowing him, you know another,
ess they both are one. Much less can it be
l that in knowing the creature, ye know the
ator. How striking and beautiful the change
he tone and language, when the same occurs
h one of the Disciples in humble inquiry!—
ye had known Me, ye should have known My

¹ Augustine.

FATHER also Philip saith unto Him, LORD, shew us the FATHER and it sufficeth us. JESUS saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known Me, Philip? He that hath seen Me, hath seen the FATHER^k."

- 20 These words spake JESUS in the Treasury, as He taught in the Temple: and no man laid hands on Him; for His hour was not yet come.

CHRIST spake thus, openly, in that part of the Temple which was called 'the Treasury;' 'and yet no one laid hands on Him:' and the mysterious reason is added, which will be found already discussed in the note on St. John vii. 6.—The Court of the Women was called by this name, because the gold and silver vessels of the Temple were kept there. This had been the scene of the interview with the woman taken in adultery.

And thus ends this portion of our LORD's Divine Teaching. 'That Discourse of the Light of the World,' (says Bp. Pearson,) 'was in the Treasury. That which followeth, was not: at least, appeareth not to be so.'

- 21 Then said JESUS again unto them, I go My way, and ye shall seek Me, and shall die in your sins: whither I go, ye cannot come.

Under the name of 'departing,' (or as the word

^k Williams, quoting St. John xiv. 7 to 9.

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rendered 'going His way,') our SAVIOUR of His approaching Death and Resurrection hereby indicating that submission to Death as an act of His own free-will. This He said ;' having already said it in chap. vii. 33, 34, see the notes may be consulted. Or the words 'again' may have reference to the occasion when the words before us were spoken ; which perhaps subsequent to that specified in ver. 17 'Ye shall die in your sins' will be found repeated below, in ver. 24, and explained by our Saviour himself.

Then said the Jews, Will He kill Him- 22
because He saith, Whither I go, ye
cannot come.

SAVIOUR's announcement to His enemies
whither He went, they would find it impossible
to follow Him, perplexes them now as it perplexed
them before : but the solution which they
oppose of the difficulty is not the same which
was before proposed. Compare this place with
chap. vii. 35.

Then said He unto them, Ye are from 23
the world ; I am from above : ye are of this
world ; I am not of this World.

The words seem to be a continuation of the
discussion which the Jews interrupted when they
asked the question contained in ver. 22. Without
doubt so obvious a matter as His Human-

ity, (in respect of which, He *was* 'from beneath,') our SAVIOUR declares concerning Himself, as God, that He is 'from above,' and 'not of this World,' contrasting thereby His Divine Nature with that of His carnal persecutors; and implying that He would deliver Himself out of the hands of His enemies by at last transferring Himself to that region of Light and Glory from which He originally came, and which was in fact His proper home. Consider how, in chap. iii. 13, He is found to have declared, even in the days of His Humiliation, that 'the Son of Man *is in Heaven;*' on which place, see the note.

'Of this World' and 'not of this World' are not merely words explanatory of being 'from beneath' and 'from above;' but they describe and contrast *the character* of CHRIST and of His assailants. They should be compared with what is found in St. John xv. 19, xvii. 14, and 1 St. John iv. 5; and will be perceived to supply a connecting link with what immediately follows:

- 4 I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am *He*, ye shall die in your sins.

Thus then our SAVIOUR explains what He had said in ver. 21. It is found that as many as are 'of the World,' inasmuch as 'therefore speak they of the World¹,' (in other words, inasmuch as they are 'earthly and speak of the Earth^m;' and,

¹ 1 St. John iv. 5.

^m St. John iii. 31.

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hat wisdom which is not from above, are
ly, sensual, devilishⁿ;')—these men believe
CHRIST, and by consequence 'd e in their

our LORD's saying, in strictness, runs thus,
ye believe not that I AM : ' which recalls the
ation already offered on St. John vi. 20°.

en said they unto Him, Who art Thou ? 25

h that blindness which is ever the mark of
rnal mind, these sinners do not recognise
ivine Name, even when they hear it pro-
ed by CHRIST Himself. And yet they have
all that Moses heard, when he inquired of
me Second Person in the Blessed Trinity
ning His Name^p !

Jesus saith unto them, Even *the same*
said unto you from the beginning.

: Greek properly implies ' What I am saying
ou all along from the beginning ; '—in less
al English, ' what I said at first, and what
on ever since saying unto you.'

e notice that our SAVIOUR had again and
declared to the Jews His Divine Origin, the
of the Divine and Human Natures in His
erson, His Mission from the FATHER, and
rpose of His Coming into the World ;
er with whatever else it can profit a man to

James iii. 15.

* See below, the note on ver. 58.

^p See Exodus iii. 14.

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know for his soul's health. A glance over vith., and viiith., chapters of the present Gospel abundantly establish this.—He proceeds

26 I have many things to say and tell of you: but He that sent Me is true. I speak to the World those things which have heard of Him.

This seems to mean that though the Speaker had a heavy witness to bear against men of that generation; and a terrible judgment hereafter to pronounce upon them, yet, till for Judgment had not arrived. 'I judge as our SAVIOUR said in ver. 15. Or, as he proceeds—' But He that sent Me is true, implying thereby that GOD would be faithful to His promises, and execute His purposes concerning them. Now, 'GOD sent not His SON into the World to condemn the World; but that the World through Him might be saved^a.' 'The FATHER sent His SON to be the SAVIOUR of the World^b.' 'No man hear My words,' (saith CHRIST,) 'and believe not, I judge him not: for I came not to judge the World, but to save the World^c.' The Evangelist speaks of His first Advent. At His second coming, He will appear as the Judge of the dead: 'for the FATHER judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the SON.'

^a St. John iii. 17. ^b 1 St. John iv. 14. ^c St. John

^d Acts x. 42: xvii. 31. 2 Cor. v. 10. 2 Tim. iv. 1. iv. 5.

^e St. John v. 22: and see ver

Concerning the concluding words of this verse, ('I spake to the World those things which I have heard of Him,') the reader is referred to a long note on St. John v. 20. It is obvious to compare the place with St. John iii. 11, 32, and xv. 15.

They understood not that He spake to 27
them of the FATHER.

Then said JESUS unto them, When ye 28
have lifted up the Son of Man, then shall ye
know that I am *He*, and *that* I do nothing
of Myself; but as My FATHER hath taught
Me, I speak these things.

Our LORD here prophesies that from the period of His Crucifixion, the Jewish people should begin to recognise His Divinity; and so we find they did². To be 'lifted up,' was a well-known phrase for being 'crucified,'—as we have already explained elsewhere³. The rest of the verse has been sufficiently commented upon in the note on St. John v. 20, which has been more than once referred to.

' And He that sent Me is with Me: the 29
FATHER hath not left Me alone; for I do
always those things that please Him.

² Consider such places as the following: St. Matth. xxvii. 54. St. Luke xxiii. 48. Acts ii. 41: vi. 7: xii. 24: xix. 20, &c.

³ See the note on St. John iii. 15. The attentive reader will perceive that our SAVIOUR'S words on this occasion are alluded to by the people, in St. John xii. 34.

By such statements it seems ever to have been the intention of the Divine Speaker to correct any erroneous opinions which the imperfection of language might have caused His hearers to entertain concerning Himself. Thus, in verses 26 and 29, our SAVIOUR had said that He was 'sent;' and in ver. 28, that He 'did nothing of Himself,' but 'spake as He was taught of the FATHER.' It became necessary to add that the FATHER, who sent, had not thereby separated Himself from the SON, who was sent; but was 'with' Him. This doctrine has been already opened in ver. 16, where see the note.

And the words 'for I do always those things that please Him,' express not *the cause* why the FATHER leaveth not the SON alone, but *the consequence*, or rather *the evidence* of that inseparable union of Natures. The same thing is here said, in effect, which is said in St. John v. 19,—namely, that 'what things soever [the FATHER] doeth, these also doeth the SON likewise.' The note on that famous Scripture must be again referred to.

- 30 As He spake these words, many believed on Him.

This becomes a very striking statement when it is considered that the meaning of our LORD's prophecy in ver. 28 was perfectly well understood by His auditory. See the note on St. John vii. 31; and for an enumeration of the places in this Gospel, where the Church's growth and increase is re-

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the reader is referred to the note on the
ds of St. John ii. 11. He may also be in-
read the note on the last verse of chap. x.
earson considered it 'very probable that a
course is again begun' at this place.

1 said Jesus to those Jews which 31
1 on Him, If ye continue in My
then are ye My Disciples indeed ;

ve how prompt He is to sustain the first
igs of Faith! There had been many Dis-
efore now, who 'went back, and walked
with Him';—men whose Faith had sud-
eclined and perished under the trial of
ctrine. Our LORD therefore reminds 'those
hich believed on Him,' that truly to be
sciples, they must '*abide* in His Word.'
r, in connection with this, St. John xv. 4
d see the notes there.

ay be worth the while of any Christian
notice, as he reads the Bible, what amaz-
ss is laid throughout on Perseverance to
. Patience must 'have her *perfect* work^b.'
circumstance has been already pointed
e Commentary on St. Matthew x. 22 and
.—The privilege which would result from
Disciples indeed,' follows.

in vi. 66.

be found worth while to refer to Ps. cxix. 33, 112. St.
8. 1 Cor. xv. 1, 2. Col. i. 23. Heb. iii. 6, 14: vi.
ii. 26, &c.

^b St. James i. 4.

- 32 And ye shall know the Truth, and the Truth shall make you free.

‘This is Life Eternal,’ (saith our LORD,) ‘that they may know Thee the only true God, and JESUS CHRIST whom Thou hast sent^c:’ to know Him, namely, who emphatically styles Himself ‘the Way, *the Truth*, and the Life^d.’

And why is CHRIST called ‘the Truth?’ Not only because His Doctrine is true; but because all the types and shadows of the Law point to Him as their object; while in Him all the promises of God, made to the ancient Fathers, find their completion and fulfilment.

The nature of the ‘freedom’ which was to follow from the knowledge of the Truth is deserving of our best attention. The very term implies a state of slavery from which men are to be liberated. It is from the bondage of Sin that our SAVIOUR here promises His Disciples that they shall be released. See ver. 34.

- 33 They answered Him, We be Abraham’s seed, and were never in bondage to any man: how sayest Thou, Ye shall be made free?

These men cannot rise above the letter of our LORD’s Discourse, but put a carnal sense on every sublime truth which He delivers. Even so, however, they boast falsely: for had not their Fathers been in bondage,—first, in Egypt; then ‘by the

^c St. John xvii. 3.

^d St. John xiv. 6.

ters of Babylon?' Were they not themselves, now, tributary to the Romans?—The echo that boast of theirs, 'We be Abraham's seed,' will be found not to die away until the end of the present chapter.

JESUS answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of Sin.

'For by whom a man is overcome,' writes the Apostle Peter, (discoursing of the 'servants corruption,') 'unto the same is he also brought bondage^e.' This is the only slavery of which CHRIST would have men ashamed; and truly, it is the most terrible bondage of any. The reader will readily call to mind a multitude of passages in either Testament where, under the metaphor of enslavement, the subjection of the soul to the law of Sin is described^f.

And the servant abideth not in the House forever: *but* the Son abideth ever.

Thus Moses, however 'faithful in all his House, as a servant,' makes way for CHRIST 'as a Son in His own House^g.' And we know that the Hebrew slave was dismissed at the end of seven years of servitude^b. By this casual allusion there-

² St. Pet. ii. 19.

See Ps. xl. 12. Prov. v. 22. Rom. vi. 12 to the end of the chapter: viii. 21, &c.

^e Heb. iii. 5, 6.

Deut. xv. 12.

fore to the practice of His People under the Law, our SAVIOUR glances prophetically at the destiny of the Jewish nation. 'Cast out the bondwoman and her son,' (was the language of one who lived under the ancient Covenant;) 'for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman¹.' Ishmael must accordingly make way for Isaac,—the Jews for ourselves; inasmuch as 'we, as Isaac was, . . . are not children of the bondwoman, but of the free¹.' The Holy One here seems to make a tacit allusion to the history of Isaac and Ishmael.

∴ 'Yet it is not the Bondage of the Law which is here being discoursed of, but the Bondage of Sin. 'The Truth' is not opposed to legal shadows, but to worldly deccits.' CHRIST is therefore emphatically '*the SON*' here spoken of, who alone can give us 'sonship and freedom, as being Himself sinless among sinners: made a Slave, in order that we might become sons: 'made sin for us^k' to redeem us from the power of Sin: dying, that we might live for ever^l.' Consider Galatians iv. 4 to 7. It follows,—

36 If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.

'Our LORD having compared the habitual sinner to a slave^m, here continues the comparison;

¹ Gal. iv. 30, quoting Gen. xxi. 10. ^l Gal. iv. 28 and 31.

^k 2 Cor. v. 21.

^l Altered from Williams.

^m See above, ver. 34.

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and intimates to His hearers that as the slave had not that right which the son and heir of the family had, of remaining for ever in the house where he dwelt, and of enjoying all its privileges, so the Jews could not have a right to remain in the Family of His FATHER, unless He, the SON, should *make them free* from Bondage, and admit them to be partakers with Him of the privileges of sons'. Consider St. John i. 12.

I know that ye are Abraham's seed ; but 37
ye seek to kill Me, because My Word hath
no place in you.

Our LORD thus reverts to their boast in verse 33; and He is about to convict them of that sinfulness which He laid to their charge in verse 34. This He will do distinctly below, in verse 40.—In the meantime, take notice that the reason why these murderers were bent on destroying CHRIST, was because His Heavenly Doctrine found no place in their hearts. He proceeds :

I speak that which I have seen with My 38
FATHER : and ye do that which ye have seen
with your Father.

Namely, the Devil,—as He will be found to explain in verse 44 ! All this, our LORD seems to have added lest they should impute to His Doctrine the blame which was wholly due to themselves. Accordingly, in language which has al-

ready been sufficiently explained^a, He vindicates the Divine origin of the one, and denounces the infernal authorship of the other.

89 They answered and said unto Him, Abraham is our Father.

Not fully understanding, it appears, but suspecting that He spake of some one beside Abraham. Take notice that we have here the ancient boast of the degenerate sons of Abraham,—referred to by the Forerunner^o, and in what follows, solemnly refuted by MESSIAH Himself.

Jesus saith unto them, If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham.

'If ye were Abraham's children, so as to inherit the promise made unto Abraham:' thus, interpreting the promise which He had Himself made to that Patriarch, and to his seed, almost two thousand years before! And to the same purpose, the Apostle Paul: 'Not as though the Word of God hath taken none effect. For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel: *neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children*: but, '*In Isaac shall thy seed be called.*' That is, they which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed^p.' As the same Apostle elsewhere writes,

^a See above, the notes on ver. 26, 27.

^o See St. Matth. iii. 9, and St. Luke iii. 8. ^p Rom. ix. 6 to 8.

hey which are of Faith, the same are the
ren of Abraham^a.'

the controversy so often senselessly waged
erning *Faith* and *Works*, are men careful to
mber that our SAVIOUR Himself appeals to
Works of Abraham? — that is, to his obe-
er, his piety^b, his patience^c, his resignation ;
e all, to his daily walk of Faith?

ut now ye seek to kill Me, a Man that 40
told you the truth, which I have heard
od : this did not Abraham.

ir LORD assigns the reason of their enmity.
as because He had delivered to them *Divine*
rine : ' the truth which I have heard of *GOD*.'
these last words declare more than is found
rses 26 and 28. Coupled with those earlier
ments, here is our SAVIOUR'S express declara-
that GOD is His FATHER.—'The condemna-
of the Jews was, that they saw a Holy Man,
evidence that He came from God, and that
was with Him ;' but received Him not. If
had but received Him then, as such, the
r doctrines of the Incarnation, and Atone-
of His Godhead, and of the SPIRIT, would
followed^d.'

gen has a striking remark on this verse. 'To
it might seem superfluous to say that Abra-

L. iii. 7.

^a Heb. xi. 8. Gen. xxii. 2, 3.

n. xviii. 17 to 33 : xxiv. 2, &c. &c.

l. xii. 4 and xvii. 1.

^d Williams.

ham did not seek to kill CHRIST; for it was impossible, since CHRIST was not born at that time. But the Saints were never without the spiritus Advent of CHRIST. I understand then from this passage that every one who, after Regeneration and other Divine graces bestowed upon him, commits sin, does, by this return to evil, incur the guilt of crucifying the SON of GOD; which Abraham did not do.*

‘Abraham sought not to kill Me; *but ye do seek.*’ Presently† we shall read, ‘Abraham rejoiced to see My Day;’ *but* (it is implied) *ye rejoice not.* ‘Ye do that he did not: ye do not that he did. How can these be Abraham’s sons? Those are his sons that do as he did!’‡

Now, since men are said to be the children of him whom they resemble in their actions, (as our LORD explained in His Sermon on the Mount,§ He proceeds at once to assign the terrible parentage of the men who sought His life.

41 Ye do the deeds of your Father.

‘Our LORD says this with a view to put down their vain boasting of their descent; and persuade them to rest their hopes of Salvation no longer on the natural relationship, but on the Adoption. For this it was which prevented them from coming to CHRIST,—namely, their thinking that the relationship to Abraham was sufficient for their Salvation.’

* In verse 56.

† St. Matth. v. 44, 45.

‡ Bp. Andrewes.

§ Chrysostom.

men said they to Him, We be not born of fornication; we have one Father, *even God*.

'They reply that they are not a race of idolaters, who worship many gods, and regarded them fathers; but that they had one Father, *even God*.'

So long as they understand our LORD to speak of natural descent, these men claim to be the seed of Abraham. But when they discover that His words are to be taken in a spiritual sense, they straightway claim to be sons of the true God. 'Not born of fornication' is a phrase plain enough to those who remember the constant sense of the same metaphor in the writings of the Prophets^a: the boast of the Jews in respect of their *spiritual* sonship, was as vain as their reliance on their descent from Abraham. The evangelical prophet had called their Fathers, 'the seed of the adulterer and the whore^b;' and our LORD Himself repeatedly denounced them as 'an adulterous generation^c.'

'In this' (says the beloved Disciple,) 'the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil; whosoever doeth not Righteousness is not of God^d:' whereas 'every one that doeth Righte-

Lonsdale and Hale.

^a As Isaiah i. 21. Jer. iii. 8, 9, 14: xxxi. 32. Hos. ii. 4. See Judges ii. 17, &c. &c.

^b Is. lvii. 3.

^c St. Matth. xii. 39: xvi. 4. St. Mark viii. 38. See the note St. John viii. 9.

^d 1 St. John iii. 10.

business is born of Him¹. 'He that committeth sin is of the Devil.'

— Jesus said unto them, If God were your Father, ye would love Me: for I proceeded forth and came from God;

Rather, 'and am come.' By '*proceeding forth*' from God, our Lord, 'whose goings forth have been from of old, from Everlasting²,' declares His Eternal Generation: by '*being come*,' He declares His Incarnation. Compare and consider that place in Hebrews, quoted from Psalm xl. 7,—'*I am come to do Thy will, O God³*;' which, as the Apostle remarks, is what '*when He cometh into the World, He saith⁴*.' The reader is also requested to refer to the two following places in the present Gospel—chap. xvi. 28 and xvii. 8.

neither came I of Myself, but He sent Me.

The Hebrew idiom of these words need not be further remarked upon⁵. But observe our Lord's ever-recurring declaration that He was 'sent' by the Eternal FATHER¹; and consider whether the absolute need of ecclesiastical mission, by one duly authorized to send, is not thereby indirectly implied and enforced. As says the Apostle,—'*shall they preach, except they be sent²*?'

¹ 1 St. John ii. 29.

² Micah v. 2.

³ See the notes on St. Matt. x. 7, 9.

⁴ Heb. x. 13, and the end of the note (c) at foot of

⁵ Rom. v. 15.

¹ 1 St. John iii.

² Heb.

x. 7, 9.

x. 13, and the end of

the note (c) at foot of

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ye not understand My speech ?
e ye cannot hear My Word.

What is the reason that ye find My
aintelligible? It is because ye have
your hearts that ye are no longer able
y doctrine.'

of *your* Father the Devil, and the 4:
ur Father ye will do.

- 'ye desire to do:' 'ye are bent on
example, they desired to slay CHRIST,
ho was of that wicked one, slew his bro-
wherefore slew he him? Because his
vere evil, and his brother's righteous^a.'
erers were therefore actuated by the
ive as Cain^o. Here then our SAVIOUR
t He had only hinted at before, in
41; namely, that the Devil was the
'generation of Vipers^p.' The reader
ot with the present passage such
Matthew xiii. 38. Acts xiii. 10. 1 St.
ur LORD adds a few solemn words
an, the chief of the fallen Angels,
of the ruin of our race,—to destroy
declared to have been the great
ORD's Manifestation in the Flesh^q;
hom, every syllable which CHRIST
ken cannot but be of most awful
res.

^o See above, the note on ver. 40.

Matth. xii. 34.

^q 1 St. John iii. 8.

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ousness is born of Him^e.’ ‘He that con-
sin is of the Devil^f.’

- 42 JESUS said unto them, If GOD were
Father, ye would love Me: for I pro-
forth and came from GOD ;

Rather, ‘and am come.’ By ‘*proceedi*
from GOD,’ our LORD, ‘whose goings forth
been from of old, from Everlasting^g,’ declare
Eternal Generation: by ‘being *come*,’ He
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* 1 St. John ii. 29.

^f 1 St. John ii

^g Micah v. 2.

^h Heb. x. 7, 9.

ⁱ Hel

^k See the notes on St. Matth. ix. 13, and the end of the
St. John v. 30, &c.

^l See the note (c) at foot of

^m Rom. x. 15.

Why do ye not understand My speech ? 43
en because ye cannot hear My Word.

That is—‘What is the reason that ye find My
 scourse unintelligible? It is because ye have
 hardened your hearts that ye are no longer able
 receive My doctrine.’

Ye are of *your* Father the Devil, and the 44
 sts of your Father ye will do.

Rather,—‘ye desire to do.’ ‘ye are bent on
 ing.’ For example, they desired to slay CHRIST,
 s Cain, *who was of that wicked one*, slew his bro-
 er. And wherefore slew he him? Because his
 n works were evil, and his brother’s righteous^a.’
 These murderers were therefore actuated by the
 lfsame motive as Cain^o. Here then our SAVIOUR
 plains what He had only hinted at before, in
 rses 38 and 41; namely, that the Devil was the
 sther of this ‘generation of Vipers^p.’ The reader
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 ces as St. Matthew xiii. 38. Acts xiii. 10. 1 St.
 hn iii. 8.—Our LORD adds a few solemn words
 ncerning Satan, the chief of the fallen Angels,
 d the author of the ruin of our race,—to destroy
 ose works, is declared to have been the great
 rpose of our LORD’s Manifestation in the Flesh^q;
 d concerning whom, every syllable which CHRIST
 mself hath spoken cannot but be of most awful
 terest to ourselves.

^p 1 St. John iii. 12.

^o See above, the note on ver. 40.

^q See the note on St. Matth. xii. 34.

^r 1 St. John iii. 8.

He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the Truth, because there is no Truth in him.

‘A murderer,’ because he brought Death into the World by Adam’s transgression : and to this he seduced our first Parents by a lie*.

But those words, he ‘abode not in the Truth,’ imply far more than this. They are, in fact, a glorious vindication of God’s Justice, and a formal assertion of the uprightness in which Satan (like the rest of his peers) was originally created by God. And hereby the intricate and insoluble question of the Origin of Evil is opened ; ‘on which deep subject all that we are given to know is that while to moral and intellectual agents freedom of choice is an inseparable attribute, *that* freedom implies the possibility of an evil choice ; while an evil choice, once admitted and uncured, leads to interminable disorder, confusion, and wrong in the spiritual Creation ; and intercepts those communications of Goodness from the original Source, by which alone the moral constitution is preserved in virtue and in happiness. That such was the case with Satan, CHRIST has Himself told us in one word ; in saying that he was a murderer and liar from the beginning, simply because he *abode not* in the Truth ; that is, *in the Truth and rectitude of his original Creation*’.[†] He was the Leader of those ‘Angels which kept not their first estate’.[‡]

* Gen. iii. 4.

† Dr. W. H. Mill.

‡ St. Jude ver. 6.

When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his
 father : for he is a liar, and the father of it.

This either means, 'When he gives utterance
 to falsehood, he speaks from the dictates of his
 father's nature ; for he is a liar and the father of
 lying : ' or it may mean, 'When any of you speaks
 falsehood, he speaks after the manner of his kin-
 dred ; for his father also is a liar.' But the former
 interpretation, which is the more obvious, probably
 presents the true meaning of the Evangelist^a.

And because I tell *you* the Truth, ye be- 45
 lieve Me not.

A striking argument that they were the chil-
 dren of the Devil,—the Father of lies.

Which of you convinceth Me of sin ? And 46
 I say the Truth, why do ye not believe Me ?

'Which of you convicteth Me of such sin as
 would make it probable that I should speak false-
 hood*?'—As our LORD said on a subsequent occa-
 sion,—'If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the
 ill : but if well, why smitest thou Me ?'

He that is of God heareth God's Words : 47
 therefore hear *them* not, because ye are
 not of God.

^a Rev. T. S. Green.

^{*} Lonsdale and Hale.

^b St. John xviii. 23.

Our LORD's argument, put into human form would be expressed thus: 'They that are not of God hear not God's words^a: ye are not of God therefore ye hear not God's words.' But He graciously begins with the more comfortable statement that '*He that is of GOD* heareth God's words.' .. 'And on this is founded the whole system of Man's Redemption through Faith in CHRIST: that hearing of CHRIST's Word is the proof of being a God; not being able to hear it, is Reprobation the proof of being not of God^b.'

- 48 Then answered the Jews, and said unto Him, Say we not well that Thou art a Samaritan, and hast a devil?

These men are nowhere recorded to have applied the former taunt to our Divine LORD; but they had evidently many a time reviled Him in this manner among themselves. In chap. vii. 20 they are found however to say 'Thou hast a devil.' Take notice of the evidence their words afford of the enmity with which the Jews regarded the people of Samaria^c. It has been pointed out that the 'Good Samaritan,' in His reply, denies only the latter half of their accusation.

^a This follows from the proposition, 'They that are of God hear God's words.' Comp. 1 St. John iv. 6. Consider also St. John i. 3: x. 26, 27.

^b Williams.

^c See the note on St. Luke x. 35. See also above, p. 103-4.

JESUS answered, I have not a devil ; but 49
honour My FATHER, and ye do dishonour
2.

Whereby, they dishonoured God Himself.

And I seek not Mine own Glory : there 50
One that seeketh and judgeth.

Rather,—‘ *But* I seek not Mine own Glory.’
who sought the SON’s Glory^d, and judged be-
tween Him and the Jews, was the Eternal FA-
THER,—who raised CHRIST from the dead and set
Him up at His own Right Hand, until He made His
enemies His footstool^e. This, our LORD declares
now, in ver. 54.

Verily, verily, I say unto you, If a man 51
hears My saying, he shall never see death.

Rather, ‘If any one keep My Word:’ that is,
believe My doctrines, and obey My commands.’
He says *keep*: that is,’ (observes Chrysostom,) ‘
not by Faith, but by purity of Life.’ . . . These
words seem to have no connexion with what im-
mediately goes before, but they cohere closely
with what was commenced in verse 47,—at which
point of His divine discourse, the Jews had inter-
rupted our SAVIOUR. And because He is now
about to resume and enlarge upon a Doctrine al-
ready partly delivered, He begins with His well-

^d See St. John xiii. 32.

^e Psalm cx. 1.

known phrase of solemn assertion^f. . . . The declaration contained in the present verse should be compared with what is found in St. John v. 24, vi. 47, and xi. 26. But take notice that our LORD's Divine meaning is mistaken by His carnal hearers, who assume that He is speaking of temporal death; whereas He speaks of 'the second death^g,' which is *eternal*.

- 52 Then said the Jews unto Him, Now we know that Thou hast a devil. Abraham is dead, and the Prophets; and Thou sayest, If a man keep My saying, he shall never taste of death.

'Were the Jews right,' (asks Origen,) 'in saying that Abraham was dead? For he heard the Word of CHRIST, and kept it; as did also the Prophets.' Consider St. Matthew xxii. 32.—They proceed:

- 53 Art Thou greater than our Father Abraham, which is dead? and the Prophets are dead: whom makest Thou Thyself?

'They might have said, Art Thou greater than GOD, whose words *they* are dead who heard? But they do not say this; because they thought Him inferior even to Abraham^h.' To their concluding question, ('Whom makest Thou Thyself?'), our SAVIOUR proceeds to direct His reply.

^f See the latter part of the note on St. John vi. 46.

^g Rev. ii. 11: xx. 6, 14: xxi. 8.

^h Chrysostom.

JESUS answered, If I honour Myself, My 54
honour is nothing: it is My FATHER that
honoureth Me ;

Rather, 'If I glorify Myself, My Glory is no-
thing.' By which words, our LORD meets the
insinuation of His enemies that He had been guilty
of vainglorious human boasting. By the words,
'It is My FATHER who glorifieth Me,'—He fur-
ther refers to the Eternal FATHER all those signs
of His own Godhead which He so freely mani-
fested in the sight of the nation to which He had
been sent. Adding,

of whom ye say, that He is your God. Yet 55
ye have not known Him; but I know Him :
and if I should say, I know Him not, I shall
be a liar like unto you: but I know Him,
and keep His saying.

Rather, 'keep His Word,'—that is, 'His Com-
mandments : ' as in verse 51. Compare St. John
xv. 10.

Your Father Abraham rejoiced to see My 56
Day: and he saw *it*, and was glad.

It is not necessary to limit the 'Day' thus spoken
of, to the day of the Nativity or the Passion of
CHRIST, as some of our Fathers in the Faith have
done. 'There be but two such eminent days,'
(writes good Bp. Andrewes,) 'the first and the
last. The first,—of His Genesis, or coming into

the world; the last,—of His Exodus, or going out: His Nativity and His Passion.’ We are unwilling however to explain the Day of CHRIST as having exclusive reference to either of these great events. ‘The acceptable Year of the LORD¹,’ in like manner, we do not restrict to any particular year of our SAVIOUR’S Ministry; but we consider either phrase to denote *the times of the Gospel* generally,—and emphatically, the period of the First Advent, the season when our SAVIOUR came to dwell with men.

The original *seems* rather to mean, ‘Abraham rejoiced with desire to see My Day:’ unlike yourselves, (it is implied,) who are grieved at beholding it, and would slay Me if you could. And so, Bp. Andrewes understood the place. He points out that joy may naturally enough be felt in actual *fruition*; but, that it should be felt ‘in *desire*, is altogether unusual. That Abraham should have *rejoiced to see*, may well be understood: that he should have *rejoiced with desire to see*, not so well . . . Judge then how great a good is the good of this Day; that not in the enjoying, but even in the desiring,’ did so affect our father Abraham; ‘and brought from him this act, the act of exultation, and made him even young again. But’ (adds the same holy man,) ‘I will tell you yet of another as strange: for the same word, you shall observe, is used of the Baptist while he was yet in his Mother’s womb, and ‘leaped for joy’ at the voice of the Blessed

¹ St. Luke iv. 19.

Virgin Mary. So that we see both old and young, Abraham and John Baptist, from the eldest in years to the child unborn,—it concerns all! All heed it; all are bound to be glad of it; all is for the joy and honour of this Day.'

But whatever may be the meaning of the former part of the sentence, take notice that Abraham *saw* the Day of CHRIST,—as 'seeing Him who is invisible:' 'not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and been persuaded of them, and embraced them^j.' For 'Faith is the substance of things hoped for; the evidence of things not seen^k.'

Is there perhaps an allusion in the rejoicing and gladness of Abraham, here noticed, to the occasion when Abraham, on receiving the promise of Isaac, 'fell upon his face and *laughed*^l?' However this may be, such a statement as the present from the lips of CHRIST Himself, (the same who talked with faithful Abraham!), must be felt to be most precious. It conveys a marvellous notion of the rigour of the Patriarch's Faith: not feeding, (like our own,) on definite mercies fulfilled in Time past; but exulting in the contemplation of designs yet future, of boundless extent, and only partially revealed. What else signified the mysterious oath which the Patriarch took of his servant, causing

^j Heb. xi. 27, 13.

^k Heb. xi. 1.

^l Gen. xvii. 17. Take notice that the name 'Isaac' signifies *Laughter*.

him to put his hand under his thigh^m, but that he certainly foresaw that the Son of God would thence to take fleshⁿ?

- 57 Then said the Jews unto Him, Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast Thou seen Abraham?

The natural rejoinder would have been,—‘Hath Abraham seen *Thee*?’ But it is obvious that our LORD had said neither the one thing, nor the other. He had simply declared that Abraham had seen *His Day*. The carnal temper which at once invents a difficulty of its own, and assumes that our LORD has said that He and Abraham, like two ordinary mortals, were living on earth at the same time,—is very striking.

As concerning our LORD’s age, it is evident they spoke only in a general way. CHRIST *certainly* ‘not yet fifty years old;’ and that is what His enemies meant to express. He was, indeed, but thirty-three. It is scarcely in point therefore to lay any stress on those affecting words of the Evangelical Prophet, ‘His visage was so much more than any man’s,’ as if they were specially illustrative of the present place of Scripture.

Our LORD’s reply shews that He was chiefly bent on removing from the minds of His hearers

^m Gen. xxiv. 2: a sign repeated by his grandson Jacob Gen. xlvii. 29. See also the margin of 1 Chron. xxix. 24.

ⁿ Notice the margin of Judges viii. 30.

• Isa. liii. 1

their fundamental error in regarding Him as mere man.

JESUS said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am.

Rather, 'Before Abraham was born, I AM.' So stupendous a declaration is introduced with the formula of solemn assertion.

The idiom of the language, which is thus for ever presenting us with the mysterious Name of the Second Person in the Trinity, in the discourses of our SAVIOUR, has been already made the subject of remark^p.

Our LORD's words, (says Bp. Pearson,) 'plainly signify thus much: 'Do you question how I could be Abraham, who am not yet fifty years old? Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before ever Abraham, the person whom you speak of, was born, I had a real being and existence, (by which I was capable of the sight of him,) in which I have continued until now.' In this sense certainly the Jews understood our SAVIOUR's answer, as pertinent to their question, but in their opinion blasphemous; and therefore they took up stones to cast at Him.' As it follows:

Then took they up stones to cast at Him: 59
But Jesus hid Himself, and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by.

^p See above, the notes on ver. 24.

Many are the recorded occasions when the One was thus obliged to save Himself by from the murderous designs of the very whom He came to save^a. Wickedly charging Him with Blasphemy, and burning with thirst to execute against Him the sentence of their Law^r, these sinners have armed themselves with such stones as the locality sets within reach, (for the work of building is related to have been going on about this time in the Temple; but CHRIST hides Himself, and escapes from their hands. Yet not, (as it has been pointed out,) by taking refuge in a corner; on the contrary, He *passes through the midst of* his enemies: by an effort of Divine power, (as it may reasonably be thought,) rendering Himself invulnerable to them; for His Hour 'was not yet come'. It was the Divine act of Him who is the 'high place' of His Saints^s; yea, who 'hideth Himself privily *by His own presence* from the provocation of all men^t.'

^a See St. Luke iv. 30. St. John x. 39: xii. 36. Consider the teaching of St. Mark, xii. 7.

^r Lev. xxiv. 16.—The reader may also refer to the following passages: 1 Kings xxi. 10 and 13. Acts vii. 58, 59 connect with vi. 11; and see St. John x. 30 to 36.

^s Ps. xxvii. 5. See also Ps. xvii. 8.

^t Ps. xxxi. 22,—Prayer-Book version.

A

PLAIN COMMENTARY

ON THE NINTH CHAPTER OF

St. John's Gospel.

1 The Man that was born blind restored to sight. 8 He is brought to the Pharisees. 13 They are offended at it, and excommunicate him: 35 but he is received of JESUS, and confesseth Him. 39 Who they are whom CHRIST enlighteneth.

THE ninth chapter of St. John's Gospel is occupied with the history of a single incident in the ministry of our Blessed LORD,—the giving of sight to its *restoration*, as in the heading of the chapter,) a man who was born blind. Blind must he be so perceives not that the wondrous prominence thus given to a few transactions in our LORD's Life the beloved Disciple, vindicates for those transactions a high degree of significancy, and entitles them to more than ordinary attention at our hands. What more fitting emblem can be imagined of the declared purpose of our SAVIOUR's Coming, which was to be 'a Light of the Gentiles^a,'—a great Light springing up 'to as many as sat in the region and shadow of Death^b,'—than this opening of the blind eyes? How could He have more

^a Is. xlix. 6, (quoted in Acts xiii. 47,) and xlii. 6, (referred to St. Luke ii. 32). See also Is. lx. 3.

^b St. Matth. iv. 16, quoting Is. ix. 2.

aptly shewn that He had come to enlighten the spiritual Darkness of mankind, 'to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison-house^c,' than by thus bestowing the gift of Sight on a beggar, who had been blind from his birth? The Evangelical Prophet had foretold that 'in that day shall . . . the eyes of the blind see out of obscurity, and out of darkness. The meek also shall increase their joy in the LORD, and *the poor among men* shall rejoice in the Holy One of Israel^d;' and so it came, even literally, to pass.

It is worth observing that more of our SAVIOUR's miracles are recorded as having been wrought on blindness than on any other form of human infirmity. One deaf-and-dumb man^e is related to have had the gifts of speech and hearing restored to him: one case of Palsy^f, and one of Dropsy^g, find special record: twice was Leprosy^h, and twice was Feverⁱ, expelled by the SAVIOUR's Word. Three times were dead persons^j raised to life. But the minute and particular records of

^c Is. xlii. 7.

^d Is. xxix. 18, 19. See also Is. xxxii. 3: xxxv. 5.

^e St. Mark vii. 31 to 37.

^f St. Matth. ix. 1 to 8, [St. Mark ii. 1 to 12, St. Luke v. 17 to 26.]

^g St. Luke xiv. 1 to 6.

^h St. Matth. viii. 1 to 4, [St. Mark i. 40 to 45, St. Luke v. 12 to 16,]: and St. Luke xvii. 11 to 19.

ⁱ St. John iv. 46 to 54; and St. Matth. viii. 14 to 17, [St. Mark i. 29 to 31, St. Luke iv. 38 to 39.]

^j St. Matth. ix. 18 to 26. [St. Mark v. 22 to 43, St. Luke viii. 41 to 56,]: and St. Luke vii. 11 to 16: and St. John xi. 1 to 54.

ON ST. JOHN'S GOSPEL.

ures wrought on Blindness are *four* in number, and the circumstance cannot be without a meaning. Indeed the record may be said to extend to *six* cases, in all? In like manner, the prophet Isaiah will be found to hint at the restoration of sight to the Blind more frequently than any other act of Mercy symbolical of the Day of the first^d.

The language of the original seems to connect the stupendous Miracle which follows, in the same manner, with the narrative which immediately precedes it. It will belong therefore to that Sabbath-day with which the Feast of Tabernacles is connected^e. Our SAVIOUR was flying from His persecutors, and effecting His miraculous escape from their violence. He went 'through the midst of the city, and so *passed by*.' 'And as He *passed by*,' (John 8. 12, 13,) He encountered the man on whom He effected the miracle. All this however does but point to a probability,—as every attentive student of these blessed Narratives will at once admit. It is not impossible that all that follows, from the 21st verse of the next chapter, took place at the Feast of Dedication,—namely, about the same time as the Feast of Tabernacles.

^a ix. 27 to 31: and St. Mark viii. 22 to 26: and St. Luke ix. 39 to 44, [St. Mark x. 46 to 52, St. Luke xviii. 35 to 43,] in the present place.

^b Matt. xii. 22, and xxi. 14.

^c xxix. 18: xxxii. 3: xxxv. 5: xlii. 7.

^d 59. ^e See the last words of St. John viii.

IX. And as JESUS passed by, He saw a man which was blind from *his* birth.

In which last circumstance, the present case of blindness differs from every other one recorded in the Gospels. The act of Divine power displayed on the ensuing occasion was not greater indeed, in any respect, than when our LORD wrought other miracles on the blind: but it strikes *us* as more stupendous; and for the very reason which the sufferer himself points out in ver. 32,—namely, because it was never ‘heard of that any one opened the eyes of a man blind *born*.’

He who reads the Gospel with care, learns at last that not even the commonest statements are made without a meaning. Thus, since the Disciples are found in the very next verse to ask our SAVIOUR a question concerning this blind man, the suspicion arises that by saying, ‘*He saw* a man which was blind from his birth,’ St. John implies that our SAVIOUR fastened His eyes upon the sufferer in a manner which arrested their attention. The man probably ‘sat and begged^s’ as our LORD passed by: and his misfortune seems to have been a well-known circumstance at Jerusalem; both from the allusion made to it by the Disciples, in the next verse, and from the manner in which his case is noticed by the neighbours and others, in verses 8 and 9.

That the sufferer knew *something* about our

^s See below, ver. 8: and consider St. Matth. xx. 30.

Blessed LORD, is quite certain. (How many things the Evangelists must pass over in silence !) The amount of this man's knowledge, it is of course impossible to define : but it may perhaps be safely assumed that he had lent a faithful ear to the reports of others concerning the Holy One, as well as that he had been careful to ascertain that His Name was JESUS^h. How accurate were His notions on the subject of Natural Religion, his subsequent discourse proves in a most remarkable mannerⁱ: while his intrepid spirit and generous nature shine out to great advantage in contrast with the crooked villainy of his persecutors. But of this, hereafter. 'As JESUS passed by,' He saw this man :

And His Disciples asked Him, saying, ² Master, who did sin, this man, or his Parents, that he was born blind ?

What first here strikes us with surprise, is, to find our LORD,—who is supposed just before to have been flying from His enemies,—in what seems to be calm converse with His Disciples. But this ought perhaps to remind us of the very little we know of the transactions recorded in the Gospels, of which particulars have been withheld by the Evangelists. Thus, the dialogue related in St. John viii. 31 to 59, may possibly have taken place in a corner,—where the attempted violence would have been perpetrated without risk of rais-

^h See below, ver. 11.

ⁱ See below, ver. 30 to 33.

ing a tumult, or encountering molestation. Once abroad, our SAVIOUR was perhaps secure. He may have transferred Himself to a remote quarter of the crowded City, and there regained the society of His Disciples. Moreover, if the character of the present miracle is attentively considered, it will be found to have been one in which the Divine person of our LORD absolutely disappears. He addresses a blind man, and at once withdraws Himself from His observation,—leaving the other to bear his witness before the Sanhedrin alone; and not re-appearing, except for a few moments at the close of the history, (and *then*, perhaps, after an interval of two months,) to bring the object of His former mercy into the better light of the Gospel, and to the knowledge of Himself. As already admitted, however, there is no *proof* that the events recorded in this chapter and the last are not severed by a wide interval of time.

Even more surprising and singular is the question which the Disciples ask. To submit their words to a process of rigid philosophical investigation, is however unreasonable. We should perhaps regard those words as embodying the general belief of the Jewish people in the immediate connexion of calamity with crime; of which we have other instances in the Gospel besides the present. It is obvious also that such a belief derived no small sanction from the words which our LORD

¹ See St. Luke xiii. 1 to 5, and the notes there.

Himself addressed to the impotent man whom He healed at the Pool of Bethesda, 'Sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee^k.' The Disciples, in their question, simply assume that Human Suffering is always judicial. But this man was *born* blind. With whom then rested the sin, they ask: with him, or with his parents? Some of the nation taught the transmigration of souls which had sinned; and the Disciples may have wished to obtain from our LORD some information on the general subject.

JESUS answered, Neither hath this man³ sinned, nor his Parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him.

Rather,—'Neither *did* this man sin.'—It is of course obvious that our LORD is not here asserting the sinlessness of any persons: but only that neither this man's Sin, nor the Sin of the authors of his being, was the cause of his having been born blind.

Not to repeat what has already been offered in the Commentary on St. John v. 14, on the various causes for which bodily sickness and suffering are found to have been inflicted on mankind, it shall be only observed that our LORD's reply seems to intimate that God's design in causing this man to be born with sightless eyes, was to make him a monument of His mercy, by causing a transcendent miracle of Love to be performed upon him;

^k St. John v. 14; where the note may be consulted.

whereby not only his own highest good in Time and in Eternity would be secured, but MESSIAH Himself would be manifested to the World. A glorious mission truly! and a no less wonderful revelation of the fruitfulness of wisdom displayed in God's purposes,—where seeming severity proves to be but the condition of exceeding Love. Thus the Sickness of Lazarus was not unto Death, but for God's Glory, that the SON of GOD might be glorified thereby¹. Here, the blind eyes were but preparatory to spiritual as well as to bodily illumination: and a suffering, sightless wretch becomes transformed in a few hours into an Apostle and Confessor of CHRIST! . . . All this is not offered as a complete account of the matter; but only as some explanation of our SAVIOUR's words. Sin and Suffering do indeed go together, as cause and effect,—Crime and the penalty of Crime^m: but we may not presume to interpret God's judgments *in particular*; nor discourse about such an intricate moral problem as if we understood it.

- 4 I must work the Works of Him that sent Me, while it is Day:

Rather,—‘I must *needs* work,’ &c. Consider St. John vi. 38, and the last words of x. 18.

This then which was to follow, was one of the Works, like those of the FATHER, which the SON wrought continuallyⁿ, in token of His Divine

¹ St. John xi. 4.

^m See Gen. iii. 16 to 19. Also the note on St. Luke xiii. 3.

ⁿ St. John v. 17: and see ver. 19.

Mission: one of the Works which the FATHER had given Him to finish^o, and which He had been sent into the World to perform^p. Chrysostom says that the words mean,—‘I must manifest Myself, and shew that I do the same that My FATHER doeth.’

the Night cometh, when no man can work.

‘Not that any night can overtake CHRIST; but as Night is given to mankind to be an emblem of Death; and the life of each is the appointed Day of his work; our LORD adopts the same figure for His own course in the flesh. As ‘Man goeth forth unto his work, and to his labour until the evening^q,’ in like manner this His Day was on the wane, and verging to its close^r. . . But our LORD straightway adds,

As long as I am in the World, I am the Light of the World.

By which words, we are reminded of the singular manner in which our SAVIOUR’s sayings ever assume an unexpected meaning, and demand a breadth of application for which we were at first unprepared. ‘The Day,’ then, of which He spake before, (*that* Day which Abraham ‘saw and was glad^s,’) however protracted its future glories, yet, in the strictest sense of the term, had the same duration as His own Ministry; lasted as long as He Himself continued in the World. The Sun

^o St. John v. 36: xvii. 4.

^p St. John iv. 34.

^q Ps. civ. 23.

^r Williams.

^s St. John viii. 56.

of Righteousness was now about to be withdrawn from the eyes of men; and accordingly, the Day of which He spake was itself now rapidly drawing to a close. 'The Night cometh,' (saith He,) 'when no man can work:' words which, as we now perceive, must have a broader meaning than was assigned to them above. They must imply, that 'the hour was at hand when men would no longer have the opportunity of beholding and believing in CHRIST, but would be overtaken by spiritual darkness.' Compare ver. 4 and 5 with chap. xi. 9, 10, and xii. 35, 36.

'I am the Light of the World,'—saith our LORD. How precious a saying for Faith and Love to feed upon! Yea, He 'is the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the World*.' The Sun which glorifies Creation,—filling the air with brightness and the heart with joy,—is therefore but a faint type or shadow of Him, who is 'the true Light.' CHRIST alone is the 'Light of the World!'

And if He *be* the Light of the World, (as He repeatedly declares of Himself^t,) then should men learn to rejoice in His shining, and to regard all things as dark and gloomy where He is not. They should try to behold everything as it must appear in *His* presence; and let everything depend for its due place, and form, and colour upon *Him*.

* St. John i. 9.

^t See St. John viii. 12. Compare also iii. 19: xii. 35, 36, and especially 46.

at safety in a path which *He* has not revealed?
 at joy in a prospect which *His* smile does not
 orn? 'In Thy Light,' (exclaims the Psalmist,)

all we see Light!'

The saying thus remarked upon prepares us for
 the miracle which follows, in the manner explained
 the note prefixed to the present chapter.

When He had thus spoken, He spat on
 the ground, and made clay of the spittle,
 and He anointed the eyes of the blind man
 with the clay,

Three times is our SAVIOUR related to have
 employed the moisture of His Divine Mouth in
 working miraculous cures: once, in relief of a
 ammering tongue^u,—twice, for the cure of blind-
 ness^v. But only on this occasion do we read of
 'ay' made with spittle being employed as an
 trument of cure. The washing in the Pool of
 oam as a superadded condition, is without a
 parallel in the recorded miracles of our Blessed
 RD. The thing to be observed however, is,
 that neither in the thick clay, nor in the sacred
 moisture, nor in Siloa's brook,—in no sacramental
 n, did the power of vision lie; but in the Faith
 him who obediently availed himself of the cove-
 nanted means of Grace. CHRIST prescribed the
 ans of illumination: the sufferer, blind from
 birth, complied with those conditions; and

^u Ps. xxxvi. 9.

^u St. Mark vii. 33.

^v See St. Mark viii. 23.

the gift followed, as a matter of course. . . Concerning the symbolical nature of the transaction, see below, the note on verse 7.

It is a highly interesting circumstance, that the ancients believed in the healing virtue of saliva, in the case of disorders of the eyes. Even the anointing *with clay* was a recognized method of cure. What then is to be thought of our SAVIOUR's employment of such media,—utterly unavailing as they must have been in directly furthering His Divine purpose? They were perhaps intended to help the Faith of the sufferers themselves. Neither spittle nor clay will have been needed by the noble pair at Jericho, whose Faith made them even clamorous for Mercy. Saliva alone may have sufficed (though it barely sufficed*) for the blind man of Bethsaida, who seems to have merely lost a faculty which he had once possessed. But the man *blind from his birth* may have required the most help of all. He will have *understood*, as well as *felt*, the anointing with clay: a less palpable outward sign in his case, would have been, perhaps, ineffectual.

If it be asked why then the man who had only an impediment in his speech was so assisted, let it be suggested that his was precisely a case where we seem to recognize some defect in the moral condition of the object of our SAVIOUR's mercy. On the occasion of no other miracle is He said to

* See the note on St. Mark viii. 25.

have *sighed*^r.—But, to return. Our LORD ‘spread the clay [like ointment] over the eyes of the blind man,’—

and said unto him, Go, wash in the pool of ⁷ Siloam, (which is by interpretation, Sent). He went his way therefore, and washed, and came seeing.

Take notice then that this was a *double* miracle. Our LORD had not only bestowed upon the man the faculty of Sight, but He had given him the astounding power to use that newly acquired faculty as completely as if he had never known the lack of it. This has been already remarked upon in the Commentary on the latter part of St. Mark i. 31. — The implicit faith in CHRIST, shown by the Beggar’s immediate obedience to directions apparently so little calculated to afford him any benefit, becomes even more striking when contrasted with the reluctance of Naaman on a similar occasion^s.

Thus did *He* give Light to the blind eyes on the first Day of the week^a, who in the beginning had called forth the Light itself on that Day. His making *clay* while engaged in this act, so highly symbolical of the New Creation, reminds us of the history of the Creation of Man^b.

That the entire transaction was symbolical, may be fairly assumed; and the analogy of other

^r See the notes on St Mark vii. 34.

^s See below, ver. 14.

^a 2 Kings v. 10 to 14.

^b See Gen. ii. 7.

places of Scripture, (as the History of Naaman's Leprosy^c;) added to the concurrent testimony of the Fathers, leads us to refer the concluding act of the miracle to that Baptismal washing, so clearly revealed in Scripture as 'generally necessary to Salvation;' and declared to be a thing indispensable, even in the case of those who, by Faith, have been already brought as Catechumens or Confessors into the marvellous Light of the Gospel of CHRIST. The reader should examine the places referred to at foot^d; and he is requested to observe that, in the Apostolic Age, 'Illumination' or 'Enlightenment' was actually a name for Baptism itself^e. What has been already offered on the word 'Pool,' in connexion with Holy Baptism, shall not be here repeated^f.

But the chief difficulty of the passage yet remains untouched: for it requires no great familiarity with Scripture to feel convinced that our LORD's injunction to 'go, wash in the pool (*Siloam*),' was not delivered without a deep meaning. If this could be for an instant doubted, the interpretation of the word, so significantly introduced, would be enough to establish the fact.

It shall suffice to point out, very briefly, the probable meaning of this interesting passage

^c See 2 Kings v. 10 to 14.

^d See Acts ii. 37 to 41: viii. 12, 36, 38: ix. 8 to 18: x. 448: xvi. 30 to 33: xix. 1 to 5, &c. See also the note on St. J iv. 42, p. 137-8.

^e See Heb. vi. 4: x. 32.

^f See the note on St. John v. 2.

'Siloam,' (says the beloved Disciple,) signifies '[a man who hath been] sent.' That this was our LORD'S own special designation, has been already sufficiently shewn^f. In requiring, therefore, as the condition of the blind man's obtaining the gift of sight, that he should '*go wash in Siloam,*' it seems to be plainly declared that the blindness of the Jewish Church, (aptly prefigured by the weak-eyed Leah,) could not be healed until she betook herself to the '*Sent*' of God^g,—even to Him who '*washed us from our sins in His own Blood*^h.'

It is further evident that the clay with which our SAVIOUR had overspread the man's eyes, was in itself calculated only to obstruct the Light. It could only act as a hindrance, not as a help, to the approach of vision. In the waters of Siloam, however, this obstacle would disappear entirely. And what does all this seem to signify but that our LORD'S Humanity was a hindrance to the Jews, and in itself only helped to blind them to 'the true Light?' *That* form of clay, wherein Deity had been pleased to unite itself to the dust, and which was all that met the eyes of men, was a mere obstacle, until they freely betook themselves

^f See the note (c) on St. John iv. 34, at p. 130.

^g Is it possible that Gen. xlix. 10, is to be connected with this name? We humbly suspect not. 'Shiloh' probably means 'He whose it is,'—'He for whom it is reserved,'—or (as the prophet Ezekiel (xxi. 27.) explains the place,) '*He whose right it is.*' Moses perhaps refers to this name in Exod. iv. 13.

^h Rev. i. 5. See also Eph. v. 26.

to Him that had been 'Sent;' when the difficulty at once vanished, and their eyes were opened.

Here then was displayed, in a most lively and instructive parable, the consequences to the Jewish Nation of our LORD's Advent. Blind like this beggar, though little suspecting that like him they were wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and nakedⁱ,—as many as received not the 'Sent' One, henceforward became even more hopelessly dark. This is what our LORD will be found presently to declare, in those words—'For judgment am I come into this World, . . . *that they which see,*' (that is, who think they see, yet reject Me their SAVIOUR,) '*might be made blind*;^k' and to this agree the writings of the Prophets^l and Apostles^m.

Lastly, by this mention of Siloam, our SAVIOUR may have intended to direct attention to a well-known place in the writings of His Evangelical Prophet, and even to guide the Church to its true spiritual application. The threat anciently denounced against Israel that they should be subdued by the King of Assyria, '*forasmuch as this people refuseth the waters of Shiloah that go softly*;ⁿ' was doubtless not without reference to the days of MESSIAH; and may well have implied that on the Jews' rejection of Him whom God

ⁱ Rev. iii. 17.

^k See below, ver. 39.

^l Is. vi. 10.

^m Rom. xi. 7 to 10, also 25.

ⁿ Is. viii. 6. The final letter of Siloam was added by the Jews of our SAVIOUR's time to the ancient form of the word—Siloa.

had 'sent,' He would 'send forth His armies, and destroy those murderers, and burn up their City°.'

It may be added that 'the pool of Siloam' is recognised at the present day as 'a small deep reservoir in the form of a parallelogram, into which the water flows from under the rocks through a long subterraneous channel.' It stands at the foot of Mount Sion, towards the south-east of the ancient City; and has ever been remarkable for the irregular flow of its water,—the cause of which phenomenon does not seem to be understood. The 'Tower in Siloam,' mentioned in St. Luke xiii. 4, is thought to have been close by this Pool; which is only noticed besides in Nehemiah iii. 15. It was always famous for the salubrity of its waters.

The neighbours therefore, and they which before had seen him that he was blind, said, Is not this he that sat and begged?

He was therefore poor as well as blind. A blind beggar! Such are the Gospel Heroes^p. The man had now returned to the dwelling of his parents; and the neighbours, as was natural, crowded to see him.

Some said, This is he: others *said*, He is like him: *but* he said, I am *he*.

The thing seemed impossible; and therefore

° St. Matth. xxii. 7.

^p See St. James ii. 5.

opinion was divided as to the man's identity. But the Beggar's testimony settled the question.

Nothing more alters the general expression of a face which before presented an utter blank, than the addition of the organs of sight. The neighbours scarcely recognised the blind beggar after he had been the object of our SAVIOUR's mercy. They saw merely a resemblance in the man to his former self. 'But he said, I am he.' This, it has been well observed, is the emblem of a sinner whose eyes God hath touched and enlightened by His Grace; who hath, in consequence, become a man so altered in his views and opinions of all things, that he appears to others scarcely the same person: but he knows himself to have been he that was 'miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked;' and that through the Grace of God only he is other than he was^a.

10 Therefore said they unto him, How were
11 thine eyes opened? He answered and said,
A Man that is called Jesus made clay, and
anointed mine eyes, and said unto me, Go
to the pool of Siloam, and wash: and I
went and washed, and I received sight.

^a He had therefore ascertained that his great Benefactor bore the name, as well as exercised the office, of a SAVIOUR; and his language shews that he had, in the strictest manner, fulfilled the in-

^a Williams.

structions which our LORD had given him. The result, he describes with the same sublime simplicity as if he were describing the work of the first day of Creation,—when ‘God said, Let there be Light: and there was Light’.

‘Mark his exactness. He does not say how the clay was made; for he could not see that our LORD spat on the ground. He does not say what he does not know: but that our LORD had anointed his eyes, he could *feel*. Our LORD’s words too, he could declare from having *heard* them’.

Then said they unto him, Where is He? 12
He said, I know not.

Obviously. He had hitherto only heard, not seen, his Benefactor; and can have known nothing of the movements of One who in fact ‘had not where to lay His Head.’ Compare the case of the impotent man, in St. John v. 12, 13.

They brought to the Pharisees him that 13
aforetime was blind.

‘These men, when they asked Where is He? were desirous of bringing our LORD before the Pharisees: but as they could not find Him, they bring the blind man instead^t, in order that the Pharisees might examine him the more closely.’ The pretence for this proceeding on their part, follows in the next verse.

^r Gen. i. 3.

^s Chrysostom.

^t Chrysostom.

- 14 And it was the Sabbath day when JESUS made the clay, and opened his eyes.

So, after recording the cure of the impotent man, St. John adds,—‘And on the same day was the Sabbath^a.’

One of the Evangelist’s reasons for adding this circumstance (though by no means the only reason) was doubtless that assigned by Chrysostom; namely, to expose the real design of these men in their present proceeding. This was, to accuse our SAVIOUR of a breach of the Commandment, and thus to detract from the miracle. According to these hypocrites, the ‘making the clay’ was a violation of the Fourth Commandment.

- 15 Then again the Pharisees also asked him how he had received his sight.

They asked him the same question as ‘the neighbours’ had asked already. They perhaps wished to intimidate the Beggar, and to give him an opportunity of denying that any cure had been wrought upon him by CHRIST at all.

He said unto them, He put clay upon mine eyes, and I washed, and do see.

Mark his firmness. He had already borne this testimony before ‘the neighbours;’ but he had nothing then to fear. Here, he beholds a formidable Court arrayed before him, and he repeats

^a St. John v. 9.

his story fearlessly,—omitting only such particulars as he knows to be superfluous.

Therefore said some of the Pharisees, This 16 Man is not of God, because He keepeth not the Sabbath day.

‘Some,’ not *all*: for others (like Nicodemus) were believers already; ‘had had their eyes anointed,’ as Augustine speaks. ‘Some,’ however, ‘passing over the miracle in silence, give all the prominence they can to the supposed transgression; not charging our SAVIOUR with *healing* on the Sabbath, but with *not keeping* the Sabbath.’ They were guilty of the same malicious suppression on a former occasion^w.

Others said, How can a man that is a sinner do such miracles?

Do we not here recognise the voice of him who at first ‘came to JESUS by night, and said unto Him, Rabbi, we know that Thou art a Teacher come from God: *for no man can do these miracles that Thou doest, except GOD be with Him*^x?’ — Compare chap. x. 19, 20, 21,—in which last verse, the voice of Nicodemus seems to be again plainly discernible.

And there was a division among them.

‘For this was He,’ (says Augustine finely,)

^w Chrysostom.

^w See St. John v. 12, and the note there.

^x St. John iii. 2.

‘who in the beginning divided the Light from the Darkness.’—See the note on St. John vii. 48.

- 17 They say unto the blind man again, What sayest thou of Him that He hath opened thine eyes ?

This is a single question : ‘What dost *thou* say about Him for having opened,’ or ‘in that He hath opened, thine eyes?’—Observe how artfully these wicked men proceed. They attempted first to obtain from the beggar a denial of his cure. Foiled in this endeavour, they seek to draw from his ignorant lips some opinion concerning our LORD which they may turn to His prejudice. The beggar’s reply reveals the amount of his belief concerning our LORD,—namely, that He was a man with a Divine Commission ; a man sent from GOD.

He said, He is a Prophet.

- 18 But the Jews did not believe concerning him, that he had been blind, and received his sight, until they called the Parents of him that had received his sight.

Nor then either,—according to the well-known use of the present idiom, so often explained already. See the places at foot².

- 19 And they asked them, saying, Is this your

¹ See below, ver. 33.

² See the notes on St. Matth. i. 25 : xviii. 34 : xxviii. 20.

Son, who ye say was born blind? how then doth he now see?

The Beggar was removed from the Court^a, while this iniquitous attempt was made to extort from the lips of a humble pair something which might be wrested to our Lord's disadvantage. 'Ye say' that your Son was born blind. Is it really the case? His look is so altered, that the very neighbours are in doubt whether this is the man who 'sat and begged.' Are ye *sure* that this is your Son?..... Overawed as the poor creatures evidently were by the interrogations of such men, they are yet found to bear most pertinent witness to the Truth on both these points.

His Parents answered them and said, We 20 know that this is our Son, and that he was born blind: but by what means he now 21 seeth, we know not; or who hath opened his eyes, we know not. He is of age; ask him. He shall speak for himself.

They answer in fear, as St. John mentions in the next verse: but they bear witness to the only points of any importance,—namely, that *this was their Son; and that he was born blind*. That he now possessed the faculty of sight, was a plain fact,—to be accounted for, they cared not how. And thus, as Chrysostom truly observes, 'the Truth becomes strengthened by the very snares

^a Consider below, ver. 24.



which are laid against it. A lie is its own antagonist, and by its attempts to injure the Truth, sets it off to greater advantage. So was it now: for the argument which might otherwise have been urged that the neighbours knew nothing for certain, but spoke from a mere resemblance, is cut off by the introduction of the Parents,—who could of course testify to their own Son.’

- 22 These *words* spake his Parents, because they feared the Jews: for the Jews had agreed already, that if any man did confess that He was CHRIST, he should be put out of the Synagogue.

So sinfully had these Pharisees prejudged the case into which they pretended to inquire! ‘Nor shall any such sentence of excommunication be void; for if pronounced with injustice, it falls back on the authors of it: never more signally than now, for while CHRIST received this man into His Church, those Jews are cut off from the Church unto this day. An awful instance of the serious consequence of using wrongly and unjustly such sacred powers^b.’—Concerning ‘the Jews,’ the reader is referred to the second note on St. John v. 15; and he should compare ver. 22, above, with chap. xii. 42.

- 23 Therefore said his Parents, He is of age; ask him.

^b Williams.

'By which words' (remarks an old writer,) 'the angelist shews that it was not from ignorance, or fear, that they gave this answer^c.'—The man who had received his sight was now again brought in.

Then again called they the Man that was 24 blind, and said unto him, Give God the praise: we know that this Man is a sinner.

Rather, 'Give glory to God,'—which does not mean 'Give it to God, and not to this man:' it is simply a solemn adjuration to the Beggar to speak the truth,—as when Joshua in the self-same words addressed Achan^d.—'We, the learned doctors of the Law,' (say they,) 'have fully satisfied ourselves that this man is a Sinner,'—that is, a notorious offender: 'do not thou persevere in thy lie!' (a method of argument, or rather of intimidation, which we have heard the same speakers employ before^e;) and they seem to wish by this saying to confound and overbear the humble individual who has just been brought to their presence for the second time; whom they would fain impress with the belief that they have been making discoveries during his absence which prove that the whole of this miraculous transaction has been a fraud.

Alcuin.

See the Greek version of Josh. vii. 19. The formula is found in other places,—as 1 Sam. vi. 5. Jer. xiii. 16. Mal. ii. 2. Rev. xiii. xiv. 7: xvi. 9.

See St. John vii. 48, 49, and the note on ver. 47.

- 25 He answered and said, Whether He be a sinner *or no*, I know not : one thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see.

He refuses to go into any irrelevant question with them. That the 'man called Jesus' was a sinner, the Pharisees said '*we know.*' Whether this be the fact, or the contrary, exclaims the Beggar, '*I know not.*' . . . One thing only he chooses to know ; but *that* one thing it is which creates all the present difficulty.

- 26 Then said they to him again, What did He to thee ? how opened He thine eyes ?

Was this the language of utter perplexity ? or of real curiosity ? or did these sinners seek thus to entrap the man into some contradiction of himself ? Chrysostom compares them to dogs which, when the scent fails, go back to some old scent.

- 27 He answered them, I have told you already, and ye did not hear : wherefore would ye hear *it* again ? will ye also be His Disciples ?

Observe that he here makes a glorious confession of his Faith in CHRIST. The bold irony of his reply is admirable : 'what is the object,' (he asks,) 'of all this tedious questioning, and rigorous investigation of so plain a matter ? Do you wish to discover that the miracle is true, in order that *you* also,—you as well as myself,—may be-

come the Disciples of JESUS?' So that his generous spirit has waxed bolder under the fire of persecution: every instinct of his 'honest and good heart' being at last outraged by what he has witnessed in the World to which his eyes have been only newly opened. Cited at first before the Pharisees, in order to make him give information prejudicial to his Benefactor: a witness, next, of the shallow reasoning which would set aside so astounding a miracle on the frivolous pretext that it was wrought on the Sabbath-day: then, plied with an insidious question, whereby he might be brought to inculcate either our SAVIOUR or himself: made to withdraw, while a mean endeavour is made to confound and intimidate his poor and probably aged parents; and only recalled before the sinful Pharisees in order to be overawed and insulted by them;—the Blind man evidently became warmed by a noble courage which made him at last spurn and defy the malice which he saw arrayed against him; and his taunt is found to have cut his adversaries to the quick.

Then they reviled him, and said, Thou art 28
His Disciple; but we are Moses' Disciples.
We know that God spake unto Moses: *as* 29
for this fellow, we know not from whence
he is.

Thus to set up Moses against CHRIST, and to contrast their respective claims, is found to have been the favourite practice of these speakers. See

St. John vi. 31, 32, and the notes there : also viii. 5 ; and consider St. John v. 45 to the end.

‘ *Thou art a Disciple of Him,*’ (say the Pharisees;) ‘ *but we are Disciples of Moses.*’ The words are all emphatic. ‘ May such a malediction as the former saying was meant to imply, be upon us and upon our children!’ piously exclaims Augustine.—On a former occasion, we heard these men urge their knowledge of CHRIST’s origin as a reason for rejecting Him. ‘ We know this Man whence He is: but when CHRIST cometh, no man knoweth whence He is!’ Here, they seem to profess no knowledge on the same object: but what they mean is that they know not the source whence He obtained His Commission, nor the ground of His pretensions to be sent of God.

30 The man answered and said unto them,
Why herein is a marvellous thing, that ye
know not from whence He is, and yet He
31 hath opened mine eyes. Now we know that
God heareth not sinners: but if any man
be a worshipper of God, and doeth His will,
32 him He heareth. Since the world began
was it not heard that any man opened the
33 eyes of one that was born blind. If this
Man were not of God, he could do nothing.

The exceeding wit of this prompt rejoinder, is scarcely less remarkable than its bitter irony;

‘ St. John vii. 27,—where see the notes.

while the instincts of natural Piety which it discovers are truly admirable.—‘Why!’ (exclaims the man,) ‘this is a wonderful feature of the case indeed. Ye,—the wise Doctors of the Law, whose office it is to try the spirits whether they be of God, to distinguish between false Prophets and true,—ye profess yourselves unable to say whether this Man be from Heaven, or not: and yet He hath wrought a miracle on me, without a parallel in the World’s history!’ Listen then while I solve the problem for you. You have yourselves declared that God heareth not sinners^h: and I quite agree. It is even proverbial that God heareth not the hardened and the impiousⁱ, but only those who do His will^k. Now God *hath* heard this Man. He is therefore *not* ‘a sinner,’ in your sense of the word, but must be from God. If He were not, He could do nothing at all in this way; much less could he have wrought such a stupendous act of power as this!’ . . . The rage of such a body of persons at being so addressed, might be foreseen^l. The relation between the speakers had become reversed. The Beggar was the teacher: the Pharisees, the taught. They stood convicted at once of folly and of malice; and are found to

^g See the note on ver. 1.

^h See above, ver. 16 and 24.

ⁱ That is what is meant by ‘sinners’ in verses 16, 24 and 31. Consider Job xxvii. 8, 9. Ps. lxvi. 18. Prov. i. 24 to 30: xxviii. 9. Is. i. 15: lix. 2. Jer. xiv. 10, 12. Micah iii. 4, &c.

^k See Ps. xxxiii. 18: xxxiv. 15. 1 St. Pet. iii. 12.

^l Consider the character which our Lord Himself gave of them, in St. Matth. xxiii.

be no longer at any pains to conceal their anger and their scorn.

- 34 They answered and said unto him, Thou wast altogether born in sins, and dost thou teach us ?

They allude to the man's natural defect, and taunt him with having come into the world with the penalty of Sin branded on his entire person, in that he was born blind. This seems to be the meaning of 'altogether:' for 'the lamp of the body is the eye^m,' as our SAVIOUR said on another occasion; and its office is to fill the whole body with light. But the wretched speakers forget that they are already asserting the very thing which they were lately so bent on disproving! They forget also that 'if Blindness were indeed the sign of Sin, then, to remove Blindness proved a power to remove the penalty of Sinⁿ.' Lastly, they seem regardless of the fearful truth that by such words they are reproaching their Maker^o: for 'who maketh the dumb, or deaf, or the seeing, *or the blind?* have not I the LORD^p?'—said God to His servant Moses. All is forgotten in the unbearable thought that they, 'the Guides of the Blind,' (as they vainly styled themselves^q), were receiving instruction at the hands of this blind Beggar. 'It was they themselves,' (as Augustine observes,)

^m St. Matth. vi. 22.

ⁿ Williams.

^o Consider Prov. xvii. 5 : xiv. 31. ^p Exod. iv. 11.

^q See Rom. ii. 19 : and the note on St. Matth. xxiii. 16, 17.

‘who had made him the teacher ; themselves, who had asked him so many questions.’ But that ‘Lights of them which are in Darkness,’ ‘Instructors of the Foolish,’ ‘Teachers of Babes,’ should be thus schooled by an illiterate person who but yesterday had ‘sat and begged,’—all this was not to be endured. Accordingly, ‘his clear and forcible eloquence is met by one argument alone ; namely, thou art a sinner, but we are righteous : thou art ignorant, and we, learned in the Law : we sit in Moses’ seat,’ thou art the blind follower of this Galilean deceiver.—So much then for *Evidences*, as a means of convincing men of the truth of Christianity ! Here had been a judicial inquiry ; and it was attended with this result ! A change of heart, not more Light, in such matters is the thing needed. The perception of Truth is a moral, rather than an intellectual act. But this has been often pointed out already^a. It follows : And they cast him out.

That is, they pass a formal sentence of Excommunication upon him,—and doubtless cause him to be ejected from their presence likewise : thereby making him the foremost of that glorious Army of Confessors who praise God for evermore. Take notice therefore how literally in him was fulfilled the blessing pronounced by our LORD Himself on those whom men should ‘hate,’ and ‘separate from

^a See the note on St. John iii. 10.

^b Williams.

^c See on St. Mark iii. 22.

^d See on St. John v. 17.

their company,' and 'reproach,' and cast out their name as evil, for the Son of Man's sake^v.

It will be seen that in the next verse, our SAVIOUR reappears. We heard of Him last, in verse 7. Henceforward we do not lose sight of Him till the Feast of the Dedication^w: and He seems to have been all the while at Jerusalem. Between verses 34 and 35, therefore, some weeks may *possibly* have elapsed; namely, from the latter part of October to the beginning of December, in the last half-year of our LORD's Ministry.

- 35 JESUS heard that they had cast him out; and when He had found him, He said unto him, Dost thou believe on the SON of God?

An interval has occurred. Our compassionate LORD, who never forsakes His people, then proceeds, (as on a former occasion He had done^x), in search of^y the late object of His Mercy; whose Faith, the experience of the interval has sufficed to ripen fully, and who is now in a condition to receive the knowledge of His Divinity. He who knoweth all things, knows where to find the man: and when He has found him,—and, as we may suppose, further revealed Himself as the Great Physician who had brought him out of thick darkness into the dazzling light of an Eastern day,—He asks, 'Dost thou believe in the SON of God?' Nothing short of this is a saving

^v St. Luke vi. 22. ^w St. John x. 22. ^x St. John v. 14.

^y St. John xii. 14, compared with St. Matth. xxi. 1 to 7.

Belief. The Beggar must confess with the confession of St. Peter, though he cannot yet speak with the largeness of the Apostle's Faith.

He answered and said, Who is He, Lord, 36 that I might believe on Him ?

Rather, ' Who is He, *Sir* ?' And so in verse 38. — ' The language of a longing, and earnestly desirous soul.' Only tell me who He is, (he seems to say,) and, at Thy word, I will believe on Him.

And JESUS said unto him, Thou hast both 37 seen Him, and it is He that talketh with thee.

' Thou hast not only *seen* Him,—(by which our SAVIOUR reminds him of his recent cure^a),—but He that is talking to thee is He.' By sight and by hearing, both, thou art making thyself acquainted with Him. So gracious a revelation, our LORD is only once before recorded to have made^b.

' Those who suffer for the Truth's sake,' observes Chrysostom, ' come to greatest honour ; as we see in the instance of this Blind man The Jews cast him out of the Temple, but the LORD of the Temple found him ; and received him as the Judge doth the wrestler after his labours, and crowned him.'

And he said, LORD, I believe. And he 38 worshipped Him.

Thus adding the deed to the word,—the act of

^a Chrysostom.

^b Theophylact.

^c See St. John iv. 28.

bodily adoration to the confession of the heart.— In one deep sentence our SAVIOUR seems to sum up the entire matter; delivering a solemn comment on all the events which we have been recently considering. The miracle itself does not so much *suggest* the image which He employs, as receive its interpretation from His lips:

- 39 And JESUS said, For judgment I am come into this World, that they which see not might see; and that they which see might be made blind.

‘Judgment’ is not here used in an active sense. The ‘Judgment’ spoken of is the condemnation implied by the severing of men into good and bad, which was the consequence, (not the purpose,) of CHRIST’s coming into this World. He was ‘set for the *fall* and the *rising* of many,’ as holy Simeon declared; for this was the Stone on which some were to build and be saved,—others, to stumble and be broken^c. He was to be ‘a sign which should be spoken against, *that the thoughts of many hearts might be revealed*^d. There was no formal judgment indeed to be pronounced as yet. This was reserved for the end of all things^e. But in the meantime he that believed not, was just as effectually condemned already; because he believed not in the Name of the Only Begotten Son

^c See 1 St. Pet. ii. 6 to 8, and 2 Cor. ii. 16. Is. viii. 14, and also Rom. ix. 33.

^d St. Luke ii. 34, 35.

^e See the note on St. John viii. 26.

God. 'And this is the condemnation,' (said our SAVIOUR to Nicodemus,) 'that Light is come to the World, and men loved Darkness rather than Light, because their works were evil^f.'

It is therefore in the sense which the words last noted suggest, that our SAVIOUR here says, 'For judgment came I into this World.' Had it not been prophesied, concerning His appearing, that He should be 'like a refiner's fire,' 'purifying the sons of Levi, and purging them as gold and silver?' Was not this He 'whose fan is in His hand, and He shall thoroughly purge His floor;' making a separation between the chaff and the wheat^h? But neither of these images is here employed. CHRIST is here '*dividing the Light from the Darkness*,'—which had also been His work on the Birthday of Creation. Men promptly shewed themselves to belong to the one or to the other state, (for 'Darkness' is *a moral state* in the language of Scripture;) and by thus arranging themselves in two great classes, they anticipated, as it were, their own final sentence; and the Work of the Great and terrible Day became exhibited in emblem, even at the *first* Advent of CHRIST.

The consequence was, that the blind, (that is, simple and ignorant, yet meek and faithful men,) saw; while the seeing, (that is, the vain pretenders to discernment, proud and presumptuous persons,)

^f St. John iii. 18, 19,—where see the note.

^h Mal. iii. 2, 3.

^a St. Matth. iii. 12.

were made blind. And this had been the well-known prediction of prophecy from the first¹.

- 40 And *some* of the Pharisees which were with Him heard these words, and said unto Him, Are we blind also ?

Some '*which were with Him*,'—to shew that they heard Him utter this saying, themselves. The expression seems also to imply that certain of the Pharisees maliciously followed our SAVIOUR about. Their question seems to be asked in anger. They fully apprehended the sense of His words; perceived that He spoke of spiritual blindness, (although with an allusion to His recent miracle;) and indignantly inquire whether He means to insinuate that *they* labour under the infirmity of which He speaks?

- 41 JESUS said unto them, If ye were blind, ye should have no sin : but now ye say, We see ; therefore your sin remaineth.

A terrible sentence truly ! Our SAVIOUR says, —'If ye were indeed in a benighted condition, there would be excuse for you : or if, being blind, ye were eager to 'anoint your eyes with eye-salve, that ye might see',—if ye were ready to confess your blindness, and to pray for its removal,—it should be removed. But whereas ye make a boast of living in the full blaze of Light,—behold, your sin remaineth.'

¹ See Is. vi. 10 : also Rom. xi. 7 to 10.

* Rev. iii. 18.

PLAIN COMMENTARY

ON THE TENTH CHAPTER OF

St. John's Gospel.

1 CHRIST is the Door, and the Good Shepherd. 19 Divers opinions of Him. 24 He proveth by His Works that He is CHRIST the SON of GOD: 39 escapeth the Jews, 40 and went again beyond Jordan, where many believed on Him.

It is reasonable to presume that the present Discourse should be regarded as having immediate connexion with the short dialogue with which chapter ix. concludes. Indeed, were it not for the division into chapters, no break would probably have ever been suspected. If there was any truth, herefore, in the suggestion hazarded at the end of the note on chap. ix. 34, our SAVIOUR will have already arrived at Jerusalem in order to keep the Feast of Dedication, which obtains special notice below, in verse 22. But it is impossible to pronounce with any degree of certainty on this subject; and a very careful reader is able to form as trustworthy an opinion as his guide. Learned men are not agreed whether the Healing of the Blind Man, recorded in chapter ix., took place at the Feast of Tabernacles, or afterwards^a; and till this is decided, the arrangement of the rest of the narrative must perforce be uncertain. It is a satis-

^a See the conclusion of the note prefixed to St. John ix.

faction to reflect, on all such occasions, t
were at all needful that we should enjoy t
of certainty, the witness of the SPIRIT wo
been express. An instructive inference ma
be drawn from the very silence and seen
difference of the Evangelists in such matt
subject, (they seem to say,) is of no real
ance. Give heed to *what* thy LORD te
rather than trouble thyself about discoveri
He said it. . . . It would be easy to expa
remarks ; but the subject shall be left
thoughtful reader to pursue for himself.

The formula by which the parable of t
of the Sheep is prefaced in verse 1, and p
with in verse 7, sufficiently proclaims its a
and importance: (see the last words of t
on St. John vi. 46 :) while a little attentio
Discourse itself is enough to convince an
its extreme difficulty likewise. In its *pro*
character, it reminds us of our LORD's di
recorded in the vth and vith chapters of the
Gospel. See the latter part of the com
on St. John vi. 35.

X. VERILY, verily, I say unto yo
that entereth not by the door into the
fold, but climbeth up some other wa
2 same is a thief and a robber. But H
entereth in by the door is the Shepl
the sheep.

Rather '*a* Shepherd of the sheep.' CHRIST alone is '*the* Shepherd:' and He will be found presently, (namely, in verse 11,) to reveal Himself by that name. At first, (namely, from verses 1 to 10 of the present chapter,) He discourses of Himself as '*the Door*' of the sheep; and the shepherds spoken of are all those to whom He gives a commission to 'feed His sheep^b.' That the attributes of a good Shepherd which our LORD proceeds to indicate, (and this one among the rest,) are fully exhibited in His own person alone, is true; but this does not affect our interpretation of the Parable. Every expression in it has a marked reference to CHRIST. His language, in order to be fully understood, must be interpreted of Himself. But still, it is plain that it is not of Himself that He is *primarily* speaking.

What then may be the connexion between the present Discourse and that which went before? Our LORD's intention seems to have been to pass a sentence of utter condemnation on the sinful individuals who had recently excommunicated^c the Man born blind, and denounced Himself as a sinner^d. So far from allowing *them* to be faithful Pastors who had thus ejected from Church-membership one whose offence had been that he believed in *Him*, our SAVIOUR informs them, first, that admission to the Ministry can only be pro-

^b Alluding to St. John xxi. 16, &c.

^c See St. John ix. 34.

^d St. John ix. 24, 25, 29 30.

cured through Himself; and that as many as obtain the pastoral commission in any other way except by Faith in Him, are but 'thieves and robbers.'—Next, whereas the Pharisees had excluded the Man born blind from the Fold of the Church, our LORD gives them to understand what a terrible mistake they labour under. In the exercise of the power of the keys with which they were entrusted, they had thought themselves at liberty to close the door against this man*. But,—'*I am the Door,*' saith our SAVIOUR CHRIST! 'By Me if *any man* enter in, he shall be saved.' Thus, the first part of the parable, (down to verse 6,) refers chiefly to the Pharisees: the latter part, (verses 7 to 10,) chiefly to the object of their recent cruelty.

What is it then for a Shepherd to enter the sheepfold 'by the Door,' that is, CHRIST? Doubtless, it is above all things to be called lawfully,—that is, *according to CHRIST'S Institution*. 'And when our LORD, as Man, took upon Himself the care of the flock, He set a perfect example of conformity to the laws of entering upon and bearing that office.' He 'glorified not Himself to be made an High Priest; but He that said unto Him, Thou art My SON, to-day have I begotten Thee.' 'Accordingly, in setting forth those laws which regulate man's life in the Fold of GOD, and the order and government of it, He does not omit to

* Consider St. John xvi. 2.

† Heb. v. 5.

speak of His own lawful entrance, and faithful endurance; and to make these the living and visible rule for all Pastors to follow^g.

But, (it will be asked,) had not the men then whom CHRIST addressed, been lawfully called? As far as external vocation goes, they had, doubtless. They sat in Moses' seat^h, and were armed with God's authority to dispense His Word and Sacraments. But something more than external vocation is necessary in God's sight, without which the highest privileges may be forfeited. Thus, when these pastors were for thrusting CHRIST aside,—CHRIST, 'the end of the Lawⁱ,' by and through whom they held their very commission,—*who* sees not that they were virtually undoing the work of their Ordination, and rejecting the Rock on which they were themselves built? CHRIST therefore denounces them by the appellation which belongs to as many as, neglecting the door, climb up into the sheepfold 'some other way.' He calls them 'thieves and robbers;' that is, men who to acts of secret fraud are prepared to add deeds of open violence. As a proof how richly they deserved the former appellation, the reader has but to consider the villainy hinted at in St. Matthew xxiii. 14 and 17; also in St. Mark vii. 13; on all of which three places he is requested to read the notes^k. In illustration of the latter term of re-

^g Rev. C. Marriott.

^h St. Matth. xxiii. 2.

ⁱ Rom. x. 4.

^k See also St. Luke xvi. 14.

proach, it may be enough to refer to the conduct of the Pharisees described in the former chapter, and lower down in verses 31 and 39; as well as elsewhere in the Gospel¹. And take notice how both classes of offenders receive their sentence in those words of God's ancient prophet,—‘Woe be to the shepherds of Israel that do feed themselves! should not the shepherds feed the flocks? Ye eat the fat, and ye clothe you with the wool, ye kill them that are fed: but ye feed not the flock With force and with cruelty have ye ruled them^m.’ What a contrast is afforded by the conduct of Jacob,—an eminent type of CHRIST! ‘The rams of thy flock have I not eaten. That which was torn of beasts, I brought not unto thee; I bare the loss of it. Of my hand didst thou require it, whether stolen by day, or stolen by night. Thus I was: in the day the drought consumed me, and the frost by night; and my sleep departed from mine eyesⁿ.’ ‘Which things are an allegory.’

We may not doubt too that in the case of many who boast of Apostolic Ordination, there may have been no effectual entering ‘by the Door’ into the sheepfold. The line of succession may be unbroken: every condition of a lawful Call to the Ministry

¹ St. John vii. 1, 30, 45: viii. 59: ix. 22 to 34. See below, ver. 31, 39, &c. &c. And take notice that St. Matth. xxi. 13 should be translated ‘a den of robbers.’

^m Ezek. xxxiv. 2, 3, 4.

ⁿ Gen. xxxi. 38 to 40.

may have been observed^o; but if Faith and Humility, Love and Self-denial, be wholly wanting, there has been no effectual entering by CHRIST. In the words of a pious living writer^p: 'No self-confident Deacon; no ambitious, or covetous, or ease-loving Priest; no proud Prelate; none of these, though in right lineal descent from the Twelve or the Seventy, enter the sheepfold by CHRIST the Door.'

Another excellent Divine has said,—'CHRIST may well be understood to mean that all who should be pastors under Him must enter by the door of His Commission, and perchance of imitation too. O awful thought for one who is entering into the sacred ministry of CHRIST's Church, and into the charge of His flock! The outward transactions, and the ceremonies of Ordination, solemn though they be in themselves, do but veil CHRIST. Under the lintel of His Cross and His extended Hands, do they pass to the sheep which He has purchased with His Blood.

'Surely it is one part of a right entrance into the fold to comply with the example of our LORD; and again, earnestly to seek the personal inward grace, as well as duly to receive the external commission and grace of authority. Whatsoever conformity to CHRIST can be obtained by humility and zeal, whatsoever can be won by prayer and fasting, whatsoever by patient endurance, all will

^o Heb. v. 4.

^p Williams.

go towards the blessed result of being known by His sheep for His, and feeding them safely in His Name'. . . . Accordingly, it follows :

8 To Him the Porter openeth ;

This mention of 'the Porter' shews that a very different kind of 'sheepfold' is intended from those with which we are best acquainted. Consider Numbers xxxii. 16, 24 and 36.

By 'the Porter' is intended the HOLY SPIRIT,—who, at Ordination, conveys spiritual powers to the candidate for the Pastoral Office, and is ready to confer spiritual gifts upon him likewise. But he must strive to shew himself a '*shepherd of the sheep*'¹; that is, one who 'takes the oversight of the flock' *for the sake of the flock*, and not 'for filthy lucre's sake'.—To such, (our LORD says,) the Porter openeth :

and the sheep hear His voice : and He calleth His own sheep by name, and leadeth them out.

Consider what intimate knowledge, as well as what particular care of every member of the flock, is implied in this characteristic of a faithful shepherd. To understand the full import of the language of the text, refer to Exodus xxxiii. 12 and 17 : also to Isaiah xliii. 1 and xlv. 4. The 'Great Shepherd of the sheep', in like manner, 'calleth

¹ Rev. C. Marriott.

² 1 St. Pet. v. 2.

³ Consider Heb. xiii. 20.

⁴ Heb. xiii. 20.

hem all by their names^a,’ having first bestowed on every member of His flock a name at his Baptism.

He ‘leadeth them out’ beside the still waters, and into green pastures^x: that is, He procures for them spiritual refreshment, and guides them into the paths of Peace. But ‘the Great Shepherd of the sheep’ doeth even more for ‘the people of His pasture and the sheep of His Hand.’ That the sheep ‘hear His voice,’ is more fully dwelt upon below, in verses 4 and 5. For the present, it shall suffice to draw therefrom the obvious inference that the shepherd must not be *silent* while he is among his sheep. The language of verse 27 will be found to supply a clue to our SAVIOUR’S sacred meaning in dwelling thus remarkably on the knowledge enjoyed by the sheep of their Shepherd’s voice.

And when He putteth forth His own sheep, 4 He goeth before them, and the sheep follow Him: for they know His voice.

Not only in the East, and in the south of Europe, but in many parts of England, (on the Berkshire Downs for instance,) shepherds walk before their sheep;—an exquisite type of the duty which attaches to the Pastoral Office, of being not

^a Ps. cxlvii. 4. Compare 1 Cor. xv. 41: and consider St. Luke ix. 5, St. John i. 48: xi. 43, &c. ^x Ps. xxiii. 2.

^y See below, the note on ver. 28.

only guides, but also 'ensamples to the flock': making 'ourselves an ensample unto you to follow us,'—as St. Paul writes to the Theessalonians^a. Our SAVIOUR is related more than once *literally* to have walked in advance of His Disciples^b: and it is worth observing that on one occasion He is found to have gone first expressly in order to encounter danger, and to protect His Disciples from it^c.

The sheep follow their Shepherd, therefore, because 'they know his voice.' They are familiar with its loving accents, and they recognise it instantly. The experience of past years has convinced them that he desires nothing so much as their own greatest good; they are ready therefore to follow his footsteps whithersoever he may lead the way.

- 5 And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers.

By the same instinct which enables them to recognise the voice of their own Shepherd, they at once discern the voice of a stranger. They flee from his guidance, and are regardless of his call. And hereby, that spiritual discernment seems alluded to, which causes 'the people of God's pas-

^a 1 St. Pet. v. 3.

^b 2 Thess. iii. 9. See also Phil. iii. 17. 1 Tim. iv. 12. Tit. ii. 7.

^c See St. Mark x. 32. Also St. Matth. xxvi. 32.

^d St. John xviii. 4, 8.

ture and sheep of His care' to shrink away from, and refuse to follow false teachers.

This parable spake JESUS unto them : but they understood not what things they were which He spake unto them.

The parable, or figurative language, here employed is indeed dark, even to *us*; but it must have been hopelessly obscure to *them*. Our LORD proceeds, in the next four verses, partially to explain Himself.

Then said JESUS unto them again, Verily, 7 verily, I say unto you, I am the Door of the sheep.

We have been compelled, in a manner, to anticipate the great announcement which is here made for the first time; namely, that CHRIST is Himself '*the Door*.' It is introduced by the formula of solemn assertion, 'Verily, verily,'—which, by the way, our SAVIOUR'S auditory much needed; for, in their estimation, to be of the seed of Israel 'was the fold, and the door, and all things^d.' Here then begins *the interpretation* of the Parable. The Divine Speaker's meaning is felt to be difficult; wherefore by the Door Himself is the door unfolded.

Take notice that He says not '*the Door of the sheepfold*,' but '*the Door—of the sheep*.' That is, He is *our* 'Door;' for through Him we offer up our

^d Lightfoot.

prayers, and by Him have access to the Father. By Him alone we enter the Church, and through Him we look for Salvation. Thus, the largeness of our SAVIOUR's meaning begins to appear. It has already begun to divert our attention from the shepherd to *the sheep*: but He will be fuller to do so more fully below, in verse 9.

- 8 All that ever came before Me are thieves and robbers: but the sheep did not hear them.

The first words are said with manifest reference to verse 1 of the present chapter: and, 'Was I sent unto the pastors that destroy and scatter the sheep of My pasture! saith the Lord.'

Literally, 'All, as many as came.' But the expression 'all' requires interpretation; for of course 'the goodly fellowship of the Prophets,' who came before CHRIST, are not here intended. Nay, all these *had* duly entered the sheepfold by CHRIST, the Door, and were the authorized heralds of His approach. But allusion is made to those *false Christs*, those pretenders to be themselves 'the Door,' (such as Judas of Galilee, Theudas*, and the rest,) whom 'the sheep did not hear;' and yet more, as it seems, are those shepherds alluded to, whose shameful spoiling of the flock CHRIST had sternly denounced by His prophets Ezekiel

* St. John xiv. 6. Eph. ii. 16.

† Jer. xxiii. 1.

‡ Acts v. 36, 37.

and Zechariah^b; a race which it is evident were not yet without living representatives. For what else but 'thieves' were the men who 'devoured widows' houses^c, and had transformed the Temple of God not only into 'a house of merchandize,' but even into a very 'den of thieves^k.' Their violence made them as robbers; and when they drew away disciples, what did they else but rob God? Nay, 'in tithes and offerings,' like their fathers, and they robbed Him^l; and that, shamelessly. See above, the note on ver. 1.

I am the Door: by Me if any man enter, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture.

And thus, the interest which all men have in CHRIST, is plainly proclaimed: for He is declared to be the entrance not for shepherds only, (that is, for those in the Ministry;) but for the sheep likewise, that is, 'any man,'—as our LORD Himself explains. By this door, (says the holy martyr Ignatius,) 'Abraham and Isaac and Jacob enter: the Prophets also, and the Apostles, and the Church.' The preventing Grace of the HOLY SPIRIT, (the Porter,) opens this Door to those who knock in Faith; and Salvation is freely promised to as many as shall enter the sheepfold,

^b See Ezek. xxxiv. and Zech. xi.

^c St. Matth. xxiii. 14. St. Mark xii. 40. St. Luke xx. 47.

^d St. John ii. 16.

^k St. Matth. xxi. 13.

^l Malachi iii. 8, 9, &c.

(that is, the Church,) by Him^m. 'For through Him,' (as it is written,) 'we both,' (that is, Gentiles as well as Jews,) 'have access by one Spirit unto the FATHERⁿ.'

The concluding words describe the security and enjoyment which thereupon ensue, and which are the privileges of God's people. To 'go in and out' is to transact the business of each day's life, in rest and its labour, the beginning and the end of every work. The Hebrew phrase denotes a man's whole life and conversation, as in Acts i. 8 and elsewhere^o: while the promise closely connected therewith, of 'finding pasture,' seems to imply that in that daily walk, (it may be in the World's 'dusky lane and crowded mart',) the people of God will find spiritual support and consolation even meat for their souls which the World know not of^q. Elsewhere, indeed, the phrase will be found almost invariably to be,—'*go out and come in.*' Here, (not without meaning doubtless,) the expressions are transposed. The former is, in fact, the order of Nature: the latter, the order of Grace.

'In considering CHRIST as 'the door of the sheep,' much will appear that is important to all shepherds of His flock. For by Him must be the

^m Compare Acts xvi. 31. St. John iii. 16, 36 : vi. 47.

ⁿ Eph. ii. 18.

^o See Deut. xxviii. 6. Ps. cxxi. 8. 1 Sam. xxix. 6. 2 Sam. iii. 25. 2 Chron. i. 10.

^p Keble.

^q Consider St. John iv. 32.

going out and coming in, if they are to go in and sit before His sheep, and to find the pasture that provided for them^r.'

The thief cometh not, but for to steal, ¹⁰ and to kill, and to destroy : I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.

Rather, 'in abundance.'—Our LORD says, 'The false teacher comes only to gratify his evil desires, by the plunder and destruction of the flock. I am come, on the contrary, that they who follow Me may have life ; and that they may have it in the fullest measure, even Life Eternal^s.'

This verse, in which the Blessed Speaker contrasts the purpose of His own coming with that of the pretenders who had assumed His Name and laid claim to His office, forms an easy transition to the parable of the Good Shepherd, which follows ; wherein our LORD not only comes before us under a most engaging image, but explains His right to a title which, from the very beginning, by type^t, and parable^u, by psalms^x and prophecies^v, He had made particularly His own^s.

^r Rev. C. Marriott.

^s Lonsdale and Hale.

^t Gen. iv. 2 : xxxi. 38 to 40 : xxxvii. 2. Exod. iii. 1. 1 Sam. vii. 15, 34 to 36, &c. ^u St. Luke xv. 3 to 7, with the notes.

^x Ps. lxxvii. 20 : lxxviii. 52 : lxxix. 13 : lxxx. 1, &c. Consider s. xxiii.

^v Isaiah xl. 11 : lxiii. 11. Ezek. xxxiv. 23 : xxxvii. 24. Jerem. xxxi. 10. St. Matth. xxv. 32, 33, &c.

^s See the note on the latter part of St. Luke v. 10.

A PLAIN COMMENTARY

‘What is all History,’ (asks a thoughtful
‘but the traces of His iron rod, or His shep-
staff?’)

Still better worthy of our notice is the fact
by claiming this character of ‘Shepherd,’ I
claiming a well-known title of **MESSIAH**. V
the question recorded below, in verse 24,—
see the note.

- 11 I am the Good Shepherd: the
Shepherd giveth His life for the sheep.

Rather, ‘*layeth down* His life;’ as in ver
17, 18.—Observe the expression, ‘The Good
herd;’ as elsewhere, ‘the *True Light*,’ and
True Bread,’ and ‘the *True Vine*.’ All
it is implied, are but vague shadows, and
fect resemblances of *Him* . . . And thus, in a
sentence, our SAVIOUR distinctly claims th
which we have hitherto only inferred to be
fully His. He called Himself, in the first ins
‘the Door,’ but He was also the Shepherd.
He calls Himself ‘the Shepherd;’ but He
the Door. Nor let any one presume to sa
there is any confusion in this; or that an
plexity is hereby occasioned. CHRIST is all
at once to all men. Every duty, every office,
relation, has its true exhibition and entire
ment in *His* sacred person. Thus, besides bei

* Rev. C. Marriott; alluding to Ps. xxiii. 4. See P
Micah vii. 14, Rev. ii. 27, &c.

^b St. John i. 9.

^c St. John vi. 32.

^d St. John x

i Door, and our Shepherd, in Him are we as in a
 i Fold: to us He opens, as the Porter: yea, and in
 Him, (in His Word and in His Sacraments,) we
 find the food of our souls likewise. Lastly, is
 not this THE LAMB that was 'slain from the
 foundation of the World?'

To this announcement concerning Himself, He
 adds a solemn prophecy, (the first of four succes-
 sive prophecies,) of His own Death; as well as ex-
 plains the purpose of it: namely, that He might
 prove a ransom for all^f. 'Hereby perceive we the
 Love of God,' (says the Beloved Disciple,) 'be-
 cause He laid down His life for us; and we ought
 to lay down our lives for the brethren^g.' In solemn
 contrast with this, our SAVIOUR CHRIST declares
 the conduct of one who 'takes the oversight' of
 the flock 'for filthy lucre^h:' seeking not *them*, but
*theirs*ⁱ. The proneness of man's unassisted nature
 to render such a mercenary service, appears suffi-
 ciently from the many warnings against it con-
 tained in the Apostolical Epistles.

But he that is an hireling, and not the 12
 shepherd; whose own the sheep are not,
 seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the
 sheep, and fleeth: and the wolf catcheth
 them, and scattereth the sheep.

'When the wolf cometh is the trial;' for, (as
 Gregory the Great says,) 'whether a man be a


^e Rev. xiii. 8.

^f 1 Tim. ii. 6.

^g 1 St. John iii. 16.

^h 1 St. Pet. v. 2.

ⁱ 2 Cor. xii. 14.



Shepherd,' acted not thus in the hour of danger¹: but suffered Himself to in order that the sheep might go Jacob also, and Moses, and David, eminent types of CHRIST, are found to have exhibited the same devotion of the behalf of their respective flocks².—C language of St. Paul, (himself a faithful to the Elders of Ephesus, concerning and others who should hereafter ravage over the which the HOLY GHOST had overseers³;' taking notice however that agents of Satan are 'wolves' in Gai whether open persecutors, as Pharaoh instigators to sin, as Balaam.

- 13 The hireling fleeth, because he ling, and careth not for the sheep.

comment on verse 11. As many as look chiefly to their earthly recompence, are 'hirelings : ' and they flee from danger, simply because the sheep over whom they are set, are nothing to them.

I am the Good Shepherd, and know My 14 *sheep*, and am known of Mine.

He claims for the second time the appellation of 'the Good Shepherd', as He had twice claimed to be 'the Door'.—And because 'the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The LORD knoweth them that are His', He further declares His particular knowledge of every member of His flock.—While noticing the mysterious intimacy which thus subsists between Himself, and 'the sheep of His pasture,' He traces the origin and progress of that mutual sentiment. '*I know My sheep,—and am known of Mine.*' 'We love Him,' (as it is elsewhere written,) 'because He first loved us'. See below, on ver. 27.—But the words which follow are wrongly translated.

As the FATHER knoweth Me, even so 15 know I the FATHER :

This should be,—'even as the FATHER knoweth Me, and I know the FATHER : ' the sentence being a continuation of that which precedes, and as it were an explanation of it. The mutual knowledge which subsists between the FATHER and the SON, (it is hinted,) is the source and cause of the cor-

* See verse 11.

* 2 Tim. ii. 19.

* See verses 7 and 9.

* 1 St. John iv. 19.

responding knowledge between CHRIST and His people^a.

A profoundly intimate knowledge does indeed here seem to be hinted at, as well on the side of Man towards GOD^x, as of GOD towards Man. Holy persons are accordingly found to discourse with amazing fervour of their blessed experiences in this behalf; so that, to such as we are, their words may sometimes even seem extravagant and unreal^y. . . . But who shall pretend to describe the depth of *His* knowledge, (or rather the measure of His *Love*,) who said, '*I know My sheep?*' Adding, and I lay down My life for the sheep.

Now, what is 'laid down' may be 'taken up again;' so that these words are a prophecy of our LORD'S Resurrection. Obvious is it to remark that He thus, for the second time, foretels His Death, together with the purpose of it,—as well as explains that it was a voluntary act. But this last circumstance is declared more fully in verse

^a Consider further such places as the following: St. John vi. 57: xvii. 11, xx. 21.

^x See Phil. iii. 8. 2 St. Peter i. 8: iii. 18.

^y For instance, pious Hooker, when speaking of the comforts of Holy Communion: 'They are things wonderful which he seeleth, great which he seeth, and unheard of which he uttereth, whose soul is possessed of this Paschal Lamb, and made joyful in the strength of this new wine.'—'There is an intimate communion with GOD' (says a living writer,) 'the joy of which is unutterable: and which those who have it can suppose to be in others, but cannot see in them, or know in them by description. They have it to themselves.'—Marriott.

18.—Take notice, by the way, that these words 'and I lay down My life for the sheep') are to be read in connexion with verse 14; the clause which has come between being only explanatory. So that the whole is equivalent to saying that CHRIST so entirely loves His sheep that He is ready to die for their sake. This momentous matter is repeated in verses 11, 17, and 18.

'And, after laying down My life for them, (it is implied,) when God shall 'bring again from the dead....that Great Shepherd of the sheep',—then will it be found that other sheep I have: as it follows:)

And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear My voice; and there shall be one fold, *and* One Shepherd.

Rather, 'And it shall become one *Flock*, one Shepherd:' as if in allusion to those words of Ezekiel,—'I will set up *one Shepherd* over them, and he shall feed them, even My servant David; he shall feed them, and he shall be their shepherd.' The 'other sheep,' which our blessed LORD speaks of, were not 'the lost sheep of the House of Israel,' but those heathen nations which were about to be evangelized by His Apostles. For 'the LORD God which gathereth the outcasts of Israel, saith, Yet will I gather

* Williams, quoting Heb. xiii. 20.

* Ezekiel xxxiv. 23.

others to him, beside those that are gathered unto him^b.' And to this, St. Peter bears witness in writing to the Gentiles,—‘Ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls^c.’—They were as yet enclosed within an inanimate *Fold*; but henceforth, they were to become members of a living *Flock*.—All these sheep, He says, ‘*I have* ;’ because with Him is neither Past nor Future^d.—And ‘they shall hear My Voice,’ because the success which was to attend the preaching of the Word, was to Him fully known before.—‘Them also I *must needs bring*,’ He declares; because the Apostles of CHRIST ‘*went forth* and preached everywhere, *the LORD working with them^e*.’ (as how should the Heathen ‘believe in Him of whom they had not heard? and how should they hear without a preacher?’) Nay, St. Paul in a certain place hesitates not to assert that this was the act of CHRIST Himself^f.—He ‘*must needs bring* ;’ because to ‘gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad^h,’ was a part of the ‘commandment’ which He had ‘received of the FATHERⁱ ;’ and was ‘necessary, in order to the fulfilment of those divine purposes respecting the Gentiles, which were declared in the prophecies

^b Is. lvi. 8, quoted by Williams.

^c 1 St. Pet. ii. 25.

^d Consider Acts xviii. 10, and St. John iv. 35.

^e St. Mark xvi. 20.

^f Rom. x. 14.

^g Eph. ii. 17.

^h St. John xi. 52.

ⁱ See below, the end of ver. 18; where see the note.

of the Old Testament^j. Consider Hebrews xi. 40. —‘It shall become *one Flock*,’ our LORD finally foretels; because, (in the words of His Apostle,) ‘He hath made both [Jews and Gentiles] one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition’ between them^k. There was therefore henceforth to be but one Church, collected out of Jews and Gentiles alike;—‘One Body and One Spirit,’ (as St. Paul says;) ‘one LORD, one Faith, one Baptism^l.’

In the Old Testament, consider what an interesting commentary on this verse is supplied by the xxxviith chapter of Ezekiel, verses 21 to 28: also by xxxiv. 13; and Jeremiah xxiii. 3 and xxxii. 37. In the New Testament, Ephesians ii., iii., and the first six verses of chapter iv. will be also studied with advantage in connexion with this subject.

The Blessed Speaker, before concluding His Discourse, recurs prophetically to the subject of His own Death.

Therefore doth My FATHER love Me, because I lay down My Life, that I might take it again. 17

Literally, ‘On this account doth the FATHER love Me, [namely,] because^m,’ &c. — Lest His hearers should overlook the Divinity of Him who spake, this He adds concerning His own Death,—which was to be His own free choice, and a glori-

^j Lonsdale and Hale.

^k Eph. ii. 14.

^l Eph. iv. 4, 5. ^m See the note (1) on St. John vii. 22, p. 264.

ous portion, though, (as far as the authors of the crime were concerned,) an unspeakable indignity offered to 'the LORD of Glory'.^a Because He that submitted Himself to the Will of the Eternal FATHER, and became 'obedient unto Death, even the Death of the Cross, God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him the Name which is above every Name'.^b

The last clause, ('that I might again resume it') whereby our LORD alludes to His Resurrection from the grave, is not vainly added. If He 'was delivered *for our offences*,' He 'was raised again *for our Justification*'.^c 'If CHRIST be not raised, your faith is vain' (writes St. Paul;) 'ye are yet in your sins'.^d—Take notice also that this short sentence, ('I lay down My life that I may take it again,') 'is the essential principle of all martyrdom'.^e

- 18 No man taketh it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself.

Rather, 'No [one] taketh it.'—Our SAVIOUR says this, not, of course, as denying the bitterness of the portion which awaited Him, and from which all the blameless instincts of His Humanity recoiled,—(as witness His Agony in the Garden, His Prayer to the FATHER^f, His sufferings on the bitter Cross:) still less as acquitting His murder-

^a 1 Cor. ii. 8.

^b Phil. ii. 8, 9.

^c Rom. iv. 25.

^d 1 Cor. xv. 17.

^e Williams.

^f St. Matth. xxvi. 39, 42, 44.

ers of the horrible sin of compassing His Death[†]. But He asserts His own Almighty power and Godhead. His enemies could have done nothing against Him, except He had suffered them. Until His 'Hour had come,' their murderous attempts proved fruitless[‡], and when they were in the very act of apprehending Him, 'Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to My FATHER,' (He asked,) 'and He shall presently give Me more than twelve legions of Angels?' 'For it was in His power whether He would come into the hands of His enemies: it was in His power to suffer or not to suffer the sentence of Pilate, and the nailing to the Cross: it was in His power to have come down from the Cross, when He was nailed to it[‡].' Take notice that 'the *loud* cry' with which our Blessed SAVIOUR expired, was a plain witness that by His own free will He so 'gave up the Ghost:' that He 'had power' to resign, or to retain it. All this has been already explained in the note on St. Mark xv. 39.—He adds:

I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again.

Very Man, 'to lay it down' by Death; very God, 'to take it again' by Resurrection: whereby our SAVIOUR declares the union of the two natures in His One Person. For, 'by that power which

[†] Consider St. Luke xxiii. 34, and St. Matth. xxvi. 24.

[‡] See the notes on St. John vii. 30, 44, and viii. 59.

[‡] St. Matth. xxvi. 53.

[‡] Bp. Pearson.

He had within Himself, He did take His life again which He had laid down; did reunite His Soul unto His Body, from which He separated it when He gave up the Ghost; and so did quicken and revive Himself. Therefore it is a certain truth, not only that GOD the FATHER raised the Son⁷, but also that GOD the SON raised Himself⁸.

This commandment have I received of My FATHER.

By those few words, repelling the possible insinuation that He was unduly assuming to Himself the Mediatorial character. His Death and Passion, His Descent into Hell and subsequent Resurrection from the dead,—the whole of the sufferings which He was about to undergo, He encountered in submission to the FATHER's Will. He 'proved obedient,' (as the Apostle says,) 'unto Death^b;' that is, 'submissive to the FATHER's will, unto the extremity of suffering Death.' For in the very notion of Obedience is implied an external Will^c.—And thus, for the hundredth time, 'Humiliation and Greatness unspeakable are found expressed at the same time. Union with the FATHER, combined with the laying down of life: the power of Resurrection, with the receiving of commandment. As Godhead and Manhood are

⁷ Gal. i. 1. Acts v. 30. Eph. i. 20.

⁸ Bp. Pearson. Consider St. John ii. 19.

^a Heb. x. 7.

^b Phil. ii. 8.

^c See above, in the note on ver. 16. See also St. John vi. 38, xiv. 31, and xv. 10. Also Isaiah liii.¹⁰ 12.

inseparably united, so is every attribute of both^d.
—And this is the end of our LORD's Discourse.

There was a division therefore again among 19
the Jews for these sayings.

'Again,' as there had been before, among the Pharisees; namely in St. John ix. 16. The present seems to have been *another visit* to Jerusalem; and the beloved Disciple remarks that it was the occasion of *another 'division* among the Jews.'

And many of them said, He hath a devil, 20
and is mad; why hear ye Him?

Take notice that when our LORD either gave evidence of supernatural knowledge^e, or delivered Doctrines of extraordinary sublimity^f, the resource of His sinful hearers was to ascribe His words to demoniacal possession. On this occasion, they call Him 'mad.' It was the charge which Festus brought against St. Paul^g; the charge which the World is ever bringing against those who act on unearthly motives^h.—No reply is vouchsafed to His present calumniators by CHRIST Himself. He leaves to others the privilege of repelling so blasphemous an insinuation.

Others said, These are not the words of 21
him that hath a devil. Can a devil open the eyes of the blind?

^d Williams.

^e St. John vii. 20.

^f St. John viii. 48, 52, and here.

^g Acts xxvi. 24.

^h Consider St. John vii. 7 and xv. 19.

Alluding to the miracle described in the last chapter¹, and which again obtains notice in chapter xi. 37.—See the note on St. John xi. 36.

Surely it was Nicodemus in particular who said this! as well as what we met with in chap. ix. 16, where see the note. Take notice that he has already taken our SAVIOUR's part,—'being one of them¹;' and that the argument used both here, and in chap. ix. 16, is the very same which, in his first interview with our LORD, Nicodemus urged in explanation of his own belief. This was the consideration which had wrought conviction in himself². Then, he was overcome by the sight of our SAVIOUR's Works; to which is now added the evidence of His spoken Words.

- 22 And it was at Jerusalem the Feast of the Dedication, and it was winter.

St. John, as his manner is beyond the other Evangelists, thus fixes a definite period in the Sacred Year; but whether only in order to mark the occasion of the Discourse which follows, or for the further purpose of indicating when much that goes before was spoken, it is impossible to pronounce with certainty. The allusions in verse 26 to 29, certainly favour the latter view. A short interval is perhaps all that intervened between what immediately goes before, and what follows.

¹ St. John ix. 7, &c.

² St. John vii. 50 to 53.

³ See St. John iii. 2.

The Feast of Dedication began in the middle of December, and lasted for eight days. It had been instituted about 165 years before the Birth of CHRIST, and was intended to commemorate the Purification of the Temple after its profanation by Antiochus Epiphanes. Take notice that here was a religious Festival not of Divine institution, and yet our SAVIOUR is found to keep it, like the rest of His nation. Judas Maccabæus was its author¹.

This Feast was kept with a general Lighting of Candles; and, (unlike the three great Festivals which could be celebrated only at Jerusalem,) it was observed every where throughout the whole Land,—whence it was not superfluous, in the present instance, for the Evangelist to say, '*It was at Jerusalem.*'

But why does St. John inform us that 'it was Winter?' Was it simply to prepare us for the statement which follows,—namely, that our SAVIOUR 'was walking' in a *covered* part of the Temple? Nothing of the kind, we suspect: and the reader is warned against this kind of plausible, yet very shallow criticism. . . . The question is asked in the profound conviction that many of these trivial, and seemingly unimportant particulars of time and season, age and place, are the strong hinges on which the gates of eternal Truth will often be found to turn.

And JESUS walked in the Temple in Solo- 23

¹ See 1 Macc. iv. 36 to 59. Compare 2 Macc. x. 5 to 8.

24 mon's porch. Then came the Jews round about Him, and said unto Him, **How long dost Thou make us to doubt? If Thou be the CHRIST, tell us plainly.**

That the scene of the ensuing dialogue was an ordinary place of resort and concourse, appears from Acts iii. 11 and v. 12. If it be the same structure which is described in 1 Kings vi. 3; (a kind of cloister, or covered colonnade,) it will have been a portion of the edifice which escaped destruction when Solomon's Temple was burned by Nebuchadnezzar.

‘The Jews’ hem our Blessed SAVIOUR round^a, as He ‘is walking’ in the Porch of the Temple, and under pretence of being actuated by nothing but an earnest desire to behold the MESSIAH in His person, request Him to keep their souls no longer in suspense and anxiety; but to tell them plainly if He be the CHRIST? In reality, they seek nothing else but a ground of accusation against Him.—By ‘plainly,’ is meant without dark speech or parable,—as when, dropping the metaphor of Sleep, He ‘said unto them *plainly*, Lazarus is dead^a.’

And here, it is necessary to point out what was the occasion of this inquiry. By styling Himself ‘the Good Shepherd,’ our LORD was claiming a well-known title of MESSIAH. The reader should

^a Consider Ps. xxii. 16: cxviii. 12.

^a St. John xi. 14. Compare xvi. 25, 29.

refer to Ezekiel xxxiv. 7 to 16; especially verse 23; also to Isaiah xl. 11: and he is invited to read the note above, which precedes verse 11. A similar remark was offered on our LORD's declaration that He is 'the LIGHT of the World^o.' His learned auditory perceived clearly enough the import of these titles; and were impatient to hear Him speak of Himself 'plainly,' without a figure.

JESUS answered them, I told you, and ye 25 believed not:

Rather, 'and ye believe not.'

the works that I do in My FATHER's Name, they bear witness of Me.

'In the name of My FATHER,'—He says: 'ever expressing with infinite care that He, in all His works and words, is in no way different from the FATHER^p.'

Our SAVIOUR's *Works*, then, were a sufficient evidence of His Divine Mission; proving Him to be 'He that should come;'—as His reply to the Disciples of John Baptist fully shews^q. More will be found on this subject below, on verses 37 and 38. See also St. John v. 36, and the note there.

He had told them in St. John v. 36, and again in viii. 42, that He was 'the Sent' of God,—and that His Works bore witness to His Heavenly

^o See the note on St. John viii. 12.

^p Williams.

^q See St. Matth. xi. 2, 3, and the note on verses 4, 5.

Mission. Again, in chapter viii., it is evident that His enemies understood that He claimed to be the **CHRIST**, for they objected to His testimony as invalid; and He in reply referred them once more to the evidence of His Works*. Of what conviction were men capable who ascribed His miracles to fraud, and His Divine Wisdom to Satanic possession? Our SAVIOUR has already told them that their unbelief does not result from insufficient evidence. He proceeds, in the next verse, to tell them what is its true cause.

26 But ye believe not, because ye are not of My sheep, as I said unto you.

That is,—not because I am not your Shepherd, but because ye are not My sheep*.—The nearest approach to this which our LORD is related to have said to them was, ‘He that is of God heareth God’s words: ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God†.’ ‘Not of My sheep’ clearly denotes the *unwillingness* of the men He addressed to follow Him as their Shepherd, and acknowledge Him as their Guide. Hence, our SAVIOUR adds:

27 My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me:

It is implied,—‘But ye hear not My Voice; therefore are ye not My sheep.’ Compare this with

* St. John viii. 13 and 18.

* Chrysostom.

† St. John viii. 47.

, what was said above of the sheep and their Shepherd, in verses 4, 5 and 6. . . . Surely, every word here is full of momentous import! For what is this but a revelation of the Divine method,—a history of the way of Salvation,—declared in a parable by CHRIST Himself? 'My sheep hear My voice,—and I know them,—and they follow Me.'—The reader is referred to verse 14, and the note upon it.

and I give unto them Eternal Life; and 28 they shall never perish, neither shall any *man* pluck them out of My Hand.

'Eternal Life,' therefore, is that green pasture to which the Good Shepherd 'leadeth out' His flock^u.—He says 'My *Hand*,' because it is with this member that we retain, cherish, and protect, whatever is committed to our care. Hence, 'I have graven thee' (saith He,) '*upon the palms of My Hands*^x.' And His departing saints, because they know that 'the souls of the righteous are in the Hand of God, and there shall no torment touch them^y,' commend to Him their spirits, even with their dying breath^z; saying, after the example of their LORD, '*Into Thy Hands I commend my spirit*.'

The sayings in verse 28 do not apply to *the elect* only, but to *all*. Our SAVIOUR CHRIST, when He had 'overcome the sharpness of Death,' opened

^u See above, ver. 3, and the note.

^x Is. xlix. 16.

^y Wisdom iii. 1.

^z Acts vii. 59: compare St. Luke

xxiii. 46.

'the Kingdom of Heaven to all Believers.' The gift of Eternal Life He offers freely to as many as believe in Him, and persevere stedfastly to the end; nor can any forcibly snatch them out of His Hand: no, 'neither Death,' (nor Satan, who 'had the power of Death'; and who is emphatically 'the wolf' alluded to in verse 12; who, moreover, seems to be the 'being' specially alluded to in this and the next verse^b;) 'neither Death, nor Life, . . . nor things present, nor things to come, nor Height, nor Depth, nor any other creature^c.' Yet are men left free to withdraw themselves from the inner circle of God's providential care; and even hopelessly to fall away from Him. All this, St. Paul has clearly pointed out from the writings of the prophet Habakkuk^d; though pains have been sometimes taken to obscure the important truth.

- 29 My FATHER, which gave *them* Me, is greater than all; and no *man* is able to pluck *them* out of My FATHER'S Hand.

Here, as elsewhere, the Eternal SON speaks of the Eternal FATHER as supreme. In what sense He is greater than the SON^e, 'greater than all,'

^a Hebrews ii. 14.

^b There is no word answering to '*man*' in the original; either here, or in ver. 18.

^c Rom. viii. 38.

^d See Hab. ii. 4, quoted in Hebr. x. 38; where be careful to observe that instead of '*any man*,' in italics, it should be '*he*,' in roman letters.

^e St. John xiv. 28.

has been already partly treated of in the commentary on St. John v. 20, and will be found more fully explained on St. John xiv. 28.—Having thus plainly declared the distinction of the *Persons* of the FATHER and the SON, our SAVIOUR proceeds to assert their Oneness of *Nature*: adding a sentence which does in fact explain how it comes to pass that no man can pluck the sheep of CHRIST out of CHRIST's Hand. Namely,

I and *My* FATHER are One.

30

Rather, 'I and *the* FATHER are One.' One, that is, in *Essence*. The 'Hand' of CHRIST is therefore the 'Hand' of the FATHER: for 'our God is One, or rather very Oneness, and mere Unity, having nothing but Itself in Itself, and not consisting, (as all things do besides God,) of many things. In which essential Unity of God, a Trinity personal nevertheless subsisteth, after a manner far exceeding the possibility of man's conceit.' And that it was in this lofty sense that our Blessed LORD spake of Himself as One with the Eternal FATHER, and not after any lower method of Unity, the Jews saw clearly enough, as their conduct described in the next verse plainly shews.

Then the Jews took up stones again to stone Him.

'Again,' in allusion to the last occasion when

they had attempted the same act of violence; namely at the Feast of Tabernacles^s. See above, the note on ver. 19.

32 JESUS answered them, Many good works have I shewed you from My FATHER; for which of those works do ye stone Me?

33 The Jews answered Him, saying, For a good work we stone Thee not; but for blasphemy; and because that Thou, being a man, makest Thyself God.

Rather,—‘even because Thou.’—Take notice how exactly our Blessed LORD’s true meaning was apprehended by these sinful men; namely, that He is *of one Substance with the FATHER*. Clear-sighted enough were they to see in His words the assertion of that sublime truth which modern unbelievers have professed themselves unable to discover there. . . . Against those unbelievers, surely ‘the very stones’ in these men’s hands ‘cry out^h!’

We shall be told (in verse 36) that our SAVIOUR had said concerning Himself, ‘I am the SON of GOD:’ and that He had done so, in effect, is plain from His repeated mention of GOD as His FATHER, joined to His recent assertion that He and the FATHER are *One*. This then was the explicit answer to the request of His enemies that

^s See chap. viii. 59, and the note.

^h Maldonatus.

'if He were the CHRIST, He would tell them plainly';¹ for it is quite evident, as well from the adjuration of the High Priest recorded in St. Matthew xxvi. 63^k, as from many other places in the Gospel^l, that it was the established belief of the nation that 'the CHRIST' might be also called 'the Son of God.' What then must be thought of the wickedness of persons who no sooner obtain a plain answer to their inquiry, than they take up stones in order to effect the destruction of 'the poor helpless Man^m' whom, a moment before, they had so insidiously approached with a seemingly friendly question! They accuse Him of blasphemy; but (on their own shewing) there had been no blasphemy at all, if our SAVIOUR were indeed the CHRIST.

Our attention is now invited to a circumstance of unusual interest. The Holy One proceeds to repel the charge of blasphemy which His enemies have brought against Him: and He does so by a citation of Scripture, on which He makes an important remark, and from the terms of which He proceeds to draw a striking inference. Need it be observed that every passage by Him cited from the Book which is inspired by His SPIRIT, and emphatically styled His own, is entitled to special reverence and attention at our hands?

¹ See above, ver. 24.

^k As well as in St. Mark xiv. 61.

^l Consider the terms of St. Peter's confession, in St. Matth. xvi. 16; also in St. John vi. 69. See also St. John xi. 27. Acts viii. 37, and ix. 20.

^m Ps. cix. 15.

- 14 JESUS answered them, Is it not written in your Law, 'I said, Ye are gods?'

'Law,' here denotes the whole body of the Jewish Scriptures^a.—Our LORD quotes from Psalm lxxxii.,—which begins with the awful announcement, that God standeth in the assembly of the Magistrates, and that He judges among the Judges, (or 'the gods' as they are called in the Law^o;) the entire psalm being an exhortation to the Judges of Israel, and a reproof of their negligence. Our LORD, having thus referred to the 6th verse of this psalm, where it is written, 'I have said, Ye are gods; and all of you are children of the Most High,'—proceeds to make the following striking comment upon it:

- 35 If he called them gods, unto whom the Word of God came, (and the Scripture cannot be broken;)

Literally, 'be loosened,' or 'undone:' implying that Holy Scripture is *binding*.—Before passing on, it is well worthy of observation that our SAVIOUR here assigns the reason *why* Magistrates and Judges are called 'gods.' It is because *to them the Word of GOD came*: that is, because, besides being endowed with the godlike gift of Reason, and being blessed with the knowledge of His

^a So in St. John xii. 34: xv. 25; and Rom. iii. 19.

^o Exod. xxii. 8, 9, 28; though the word is translated 'gods' only in the 28th verse.

Law, (so that they might, if they would, conform
 their will to God's Will, and work with Him;) *they had received authority from God*; and were
 by Him commissioned to exercise portions of His
 Power in the World: ('for there is no Power
 but of God; the powers that be are ordained of
 God^p:') and were therefore, in a manner, 'gods,'
 each in the place which God had assigned them.
 'Take heed what ye do,' (it was said to them an-
 ciently,) 'for ye judge not for man, but for the
 LORD, who is with you in the judgment^q.'

So dignified and important a statement from
 the lips of Him who is the source of all authority
 and power will be felt to supply matter for solemn
 and profitable meditation. Let the whole psalm
 be studied, and it will be felt that 'when God had
 spoken to men, and called their spirit (which was
 made in His image) to awake and work with Him,
 then He said 'Ye are gods,' that He might put
 strongly before them the truth that they were
 made in His image, and must not think to live a
 mere carnal life without being judged for it.
 That life they were choosing indeed, and living
 according to it, and not according to God; and
 so they are warned that they are forfeiting their
 best portion and true honour: 'Ye shall die like
 men, ye shall fall like one of the princes.' Truly,
 a sad end for those who had a calling from God,
 and a spiritual life which they might live in His

^p Rom. xiii. 1.

^q 2 Chron. xix. 6.

glory for ever, if they would but use the powers He gave them according to His Will!'

To return, however, to the Divine argument.—If (says our SAVIOUR) Holy Scripture calleth certain men 'gods,' for no other reason than because unto them God's commission came,—(and the authority of every statement contained in the Law is undeniable, nor may it on any account be made light of and disregarded,)—

- 36 say ye of Him, whom the FATHER hath sanctified, and sent into the World, Thou blasphemest; because I said, I am the SON of God?

'Him' should be in italics. It is rather, 'Say ye of *Me*.' That is, Do ye presume to charge *Me* with blasphemy, whom the FATHER hath consecrated, and commissioned to the most eminent and extraordinary office, because I said I am the SON of GOD?—See above, the note on verse 33.—And take notice that although it be true that the HOLY GHOST 'was bestowed without measure on the Incarnate SON, whose Humanity He sanctified from the beginning, and continued progressively to sanctify to the end';—yet, by the phrase 'whom the FATHER *hath sanctified*,' is meant not this; but rather, that act of special Sanc-

* Rev. C. Marriott.

* The same mistake occurs in the translation of St. John xix. 37, —where see the note.

* Dr. W. H. Mill.

tification of the Manhood of CHRIST which consisted in the union of the Godhead therewith. The expression is therefore equivalent to what we met with in St. John vi. 27,—namely, ‘for Him,’ (that is, the Son of Man,) ‘hath GOD the FATHER sealed.’

The argument will therefore be of the following kind:—If *mere men*, because they enjoy God’s delegated power and authority, may without blame be styled ‘gods,’ with how much better right may *I*,—declared as I am to be GOD’s own SON, by the evidence which My works afford that the Godhead is united to the Manhood in My person,—lay claim to the same title! In which words, Bishop Bull directs attention to a peculiar nicety of expression. Our SAVIOUR speaks not of Himself as One ‘whom GOD hath sanctified;’ but, ‘whom the FATHER hath sanctified:’ thereby giving His hearers to understand that GOD began not *then* to be His FATHER when He sanctified Him, and sent Him into the World; but on the contrary, that being already His FATHER, GOD sanctified and sent Him. And this great truth is further marked by the expression ‘*sent into the World;*’ which implies that CHRIST had first been the SON of GOD *in Heaven*^u.

Lastly,—it will be perceived that our LORD’s words do not by any means imply (as at first sight might appear) that He claimed to be ‘God,’ in no other sense than that in which the Judges of

^u Consider St. John xvi. 28,—where see the note.

Israel are styled 'gods' in the Law. His words, on the contrary, altogether exclude such a supposition; for He speaks of Himself expressly as One '*whom the FATHER hath sanctified and sent into the World.*' The purport of His remonstrance is therefore simply this: 'How can God's own SON, being very God, be guilty of blasphemy for saying, I am the SON of GOD, if there be no blasphemy in calling those persons 'gods,' and 'sons of God^x,' to whom merely the Word of God came?' In the words of an excellent writer, — 'He who had such a witness as St. John, and who could do such works Himself, in proof of His being from God, had a right to call upon them to hear Him, as being the person '*whom God the FATHER had sanctified, and sent into the world.*' The words of such a person they were not lightly to charge with blasphemy. They ought rather to have heard them with reverence; and if any thing struck them as strange and different from what they had expected, they ought to have supposed they did not quite rightly understand it, and asked the meaning of it humbly, instead of setting themselves up for His judges.'

It is not of course denied that, in point of fact, our SAVIOUR was really making Himself equal with God, whereas the Psalmist never meant to say that those he spoke of were really gods. Purposely however did He use words which might

^x 'Children of the Most High.' Ps. lxxxii. 6.

^y Rev. C. Marriott.

not at once shew the whole truth, in order to lead His hearers on by degrees, (if they would hear,) to the fuller knowledge of Himself.

But in the meantime, the obvious answer to His entire remonstrance would have been a denial that the FATHER had so sanctified Him, and sent Him into the World. Accordingly, in the very next verse, He proceeds to establish this,—to assert the Godhead which He had in common with the FATHER,—by an argument derived from His own miracles. As it follows :

If I do not the works of My FATHER, 37
believe Me not. But if I do, though ye 38
believe not Me, believe the works : that ye
may know, and believe, that the FATHER *is*
in Me, and I in Him.

That is,—Because I styled Myself emphatically the SON of GOD, and said that 'I and the FATHER are One,' ye charged Me with blasphemy. In which proceeding of yours, there would perhaps have been some reason if I had sought to establish My Divinity by My words only, and not by My acts as well. Inasmuch however as ye see Me perform the self-same almighty works with My FATHER, wherefore do ye not believe Me to be of the self-same Nature with Him? I require not of you that ye should believe My testimony concerning Myself, but only that ye would be persuaded by My works that the FATHER *is* in Me,

and I in Him: in other words, that, (as I said,) 'I and the FATHER are One^z.'

In all this, the attention which our SAVIOUR emphatically calls to His Works, and the great stress which He lays upon these as the special evidence of His Divine Nature and Commission, is much to be noticed; and should be studied in connexion with the other places referred to at foot^a. For 'in almost every expression throughout this Gospel,' (as a pious writer remarks,) 'there is the building up of a higher doctrine, like a solemn Creed, set to the music which is in Heaven; with the same cadences ever and again returning^b.'

39 Therefore they sought again to take Him: but He escaped out of their hand,

'Again,'—as they had doubtless done before, in verse 31; when, having armed themselves with stones, they must have intended to drag our LORD out of the Temple^c, in order to put Him to death. 'But He escaped out of their hand,'—miraculously preserving His life, as on a former occasion. See chapter viii. 59, and the note there. 'They apprehended Him not,' (says Augustine,) 'because they had not the hands of Faith: (by which, God grant that *we* may apprehend Him, and not let

^z From Bp. Bull.

^a See above, ver. 25, and the note there. Also, St. John v. 36: xiv. 10, 11: xv. 24. Consider also St. Matth. xi. 2 to 6. St. Luke vii. 19 to 23. ^b Williams. ^c See above, ver. 23.

Him go !') To be near to God, without Faith, is to be of all the furthest from Him. For Him to come near unto us in Love, and not to be loved in return by us, by some inscrutable mystery of our nature, engenders deepest hate of Goodness. No death is so hopeless as his who dies near the very source of life^d !

Our SAVIOUR therefore, fleeing from the murderous designs of His enemies, now left Jerusalem ; agreeably to the precept which He had delivered to His Disciples on a former occasion^e :

and went away again beyond Jordan into 40 the place where John at first baptized ; and there He abode.

' Again,'—as He may have done after the Feast of Tabernacles'. He abode at the place where the Forerunner ' at first baptized,' namely, ' Bethabara beyond Jordan.' See St. John i. 28, 29.

It is interesting to reflect on what must have been the joy and wonder of many a humble believer, on beholding our SAVIOUR'S return to the scene of His Baptism ; the locality where the miraculous manifestation which had attended that great event^f must still have been well remembered ; and where the witness of John must have at once recurred to the memory of all. Full three

^d Williams.

^e See St. Matthew x. 23, and the places referred to in the margin.

^f St. John ix. 7.

^g See St. Matthew iii. 16, 17, and St. John i. 32, 33.

years had elapsed since then. The statements which follow, do not in the least surprise us, namely,—

- 41 And many resorted unto Him, and said, John did no miracle: but all things that John spake of this Man were true.

This is one of those highly suggestive places which, in addition to all they tell us, leave us to infer so many things besides. Thus we learn first, that many of the people of the place came to our Lord, when He went to live among them. Next, while we obtain the striking information that John Baptist 'did no miracle,' and are led to infer how mightily the Grace of God must have wrought with him, that, unaided by the particular species of evidence which the Jews were so prone to require^b, (but which it was nevertheless reserved for MESSIAH to exhibit he should have succeeded in drawing multitudes to his Baptismⁱ; the present place further suggests that our SAVIOUR, during His residence at Bethabara, wrought *many* miracles; the sight which produced the testimony of contrast, has been recorded by the Evangelist.

Then further, if the known sayings of the Baptist are attentively examined, it will perhaps be felt that to none of them can these words of t

^b See 'St. Matth. xii. 38: xvi. 1. St. John ii. 18: vi. 30:—any of which places, see the commentary.

ⁱ St. Matth. iii. 5: St. Mark i. 5: St. Luke iii. 7.

men of Bethabara be thought to apply. Those sayings do but amount to a declaration that CHRIST was to be a greater One than the Baptist himself^k, even the SON of GOD^l, but there will have been several more minute predictions concerning MESSIAH, certain infallible notes which John will have taught them to look for; all of which our SAVIOUR will have displayed during His present residence among them.

The saying recorded in the text amounts therefore to this:—How safely and wisely shall we yield to *Him* our hearty and entire belief; who by so many miraculous signs supports His claim to be the MESSIAH! If all things which John spake concerning Him be true, why should we except the Baptist's plain declaration that this is indeed the CHRIST? . . . Accordingly it follows:

And many believed on Him there.

42

A brief, but emphatic notice; reminding us of the many places where the Church's progressive increase is incidentally alluded to; and which will be found enumerated in the note on the last words of St. John ii. 11.

Delightful and refreshing is it, amid the many examples of the 'contradiction of sinners^m' which distress us in the Gospel, to meet with these brief

^k St. John i. 26, 27. Take notice that the longest recorded discourse of the Baptist, (St. John iii. 27 to 36,) was pronounced at 'Ænon near to Salim,'—St. John iii. 23.

^l St. John i. 34.

^m Hebrews xii. 3.

notices of the Church's early increase. Silently and calmly in the despised Galilee, in the hated Samaria, in the parts beyond Jordan, at Bethany, in the hostile capital itself,—silently and secretly are the living stones found to have been wrought into beauty by the Hand of the Divine Artist; whereby *that* came to pass in respect of God's spiritual Temple which had been exhibited in type in the construction of His material Shrine;—‘the House, when it was in building, was built of stone made ready before it was brought thither: so that there was neither hammer nor axe nor any tool of iron heard in the House while it was in building^a.’

^a 1 Kings vi. 7.

PLAIN COMMENTARY

ON THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER OF

St. John's Gospel.

1 CHRIST raiseth Lazarus, four days buried. 45 Many Jews believe. 47 The High-priests and Pharisees gather a council against CHRIST. 49 Caiaphas prophesieth. 54 JESUS hid Himself. 55 At the Passover they enquire after Him, and lay wait for Him.

It is a remarkable feature in the present Gospel that each chapter seems to contain some one great subject,—the narrative chiefly of a single incident : so that we are able by a short phrase to bring the whole of each chapter before the memory. Thus, THE WORD, Cana, Nicodemus, the Woman of Samaria, the Pool of Bethesda, the Miracle of the Loaves, the Woman taken in Adultery, the Man born blind, the Good Shepherd,—these few words seem to set before us, with sufficient exactness, the ten chapters of St. John which have gone before. The present chapter, in like manner, is entirely devoted to *the Raising of Lazarus* ; which, as Augustine truly remarks, is more spoken of than any of our LORD's miracles.

The circumstance is certainly worthy of attention that so stupendous an event should be not only unrecorded, but not even alluded to, either by St. Matthew, St. Mark, or St. Luke. The same thing may be said, however, with almost equal

truth, of the whole contents of St. John's Gospel. And the *reason* of it seems hardly a legitimate subject of inquiry. The silence of St. Matthew concerning our LORD's Ascension into Heaven might perhaps surprise us; for it is an Article of the Creed. Not so the last of the three miracles of Raising the Dead; however surpassing the other two in wonder, as things seem wonderful to us.

What may be the correct *inference*, however, to be derived from the silence of the other Evangelists on this great subject, seems to be highly deserving our attention: nor is it hard to discover it. How sublime a comment does it afford on that statement of the beloved Disciple,—that 'there are also *many other things* which JESUS did; the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the World itself could not contain the books that should be written^a!'

XI. Now a certain *man* was sick, *named* Lazarus, of Bethany, the town of Mary and her sister Martha.

We are indebted to St. John's Gospel for our knowledge of the family of Bethany,—that brother, and that pair of holy sisters, whom the Son of Man 'loved^b;' and who seem to have enjoyed the amazing privilege of furnishing Him with a shelter during His residences at Jerusalem. Those departures from the capital during the last days of

^a St. John xxi. 25.

^b See below, ver. 5.

Ministry, when He is said to have gone out Bethany^c, may well indicate His withdrawal for night to the house of Martha,—for we find it ken of in a certain place^d, as if *she* were ac-
lly the mistress of the house.—St. Luke indeed t mentions the two sisters, as well as St. John :
the present Evangelist alone mentions Laza-
; whose name occurs for the first time in the sage before us. A name divinely significant, ly ! for Lazarus, or rather *Eleazar*^e, (which is same word,) denotes one '*whom GOD aids*' . . .
en our LORD heard that this man '*was sick,*'
was Himself residing with His Disciples at habara, on the eastern side of the Jordan, as
orded at the close of chapter x.^f

It was *that* Mary which anointed the LORD 2
h ointment, and wiped His feet with her
r, whose brother Lazarus was sick.)

This incidental remark, whereby the blessed
ter identifies the Mary of whom he is about to
ak, and distinguishes her from all the other
ries who are named in the Gospel, suggests two
ervations : the first, critical,—namely, that St.
n is here alluding to a transaction which
k place *after* the raising of Lazarus. The entire

St. Mark xi. 12, [St. Matth. xxi. 18.] 19. St. Luke xxi. 37.
St. Luke x. 38.

The name occurs twenty or thirty times in the Old Testa-
it ; first, in Exod. vi. 25.

St. John's 40,—where see the note.

history having long since elapsed, at the time when the Evangelist wrote his Gospel, he naturally speaks of the anointing in the present tense, though it was yet future when our Saviour heard of the sickness of Lazarus.

The other observation has been already made in connexion with the first words of St. John 46: namely, that it is altogether in the manner of the beloved Disciple to identify personal places by some one incident which rendered them for ever famous. His allusion to Cana of Galilee and Bethabara beyond Jordan, will occur to every reader at once. His method of identifying persons, as Mary's sister, Lazarus, the sister of Lazarus, Martha, and himself, are even more striking.

The act of Mary which unassisted human nature would probably have rather pitched upon as uncharacteristic, would have been her sitting at the feet of Jesus, recorded in St. Luke x. 38 to which the notes may be referred to.

8 Therefore his sisters sent unto Him saying, LORD, behold, he whom Thou lovest is sick.

From which it appears that they knew, at that time, the place of our SAVIOUR'S sojourn;

* St. John iv. 46 and x. 40.

† St. John vii. 50:

‡ St. John xii. 1.

§ Alluding to the present

|| See St. John xviii. 14, alluding to xi. 50.

¶ St. John xxi. 20,

is somewhat remarkable. It is evident however from St. John x. 41, 42, that He was not living in any privacy at Bethabara. — Unlearned readers may like to be told that what St. John actually says, is,—‘*The sisters then sent unto Him:*’ but all may be invited to take notice that these holy women send no direct *petition* to our SAVIOUR. They neither say ‘Come down ere he die^m;’ nor ‘Come and lay Thy Hands on him, and he shall liveⁿ;’ nor even ‘Speak the word only, and he shall be healed^o.’ They do but remind Him of *His love* for their dying brother, and are content with having urged that tender plea. After thus, without request, ‘making their requests known unto God,’ it seems as if they sought to be ‘careful for nothing^p.’ . . . Consider St. John ii. 3.

When JESUS heard *that*, He said, This ⁴ sickness is not unto death, but for the Glory of God, that the SON of God might be glorified thereby.

The saying of One who seeth the end from the beginning! These words may be supposed to have been addressed to the messengers of Martha and Mary. The meaning is sufficiently obvious; namely, that the design of God in sending this sickness, (of which our LORD shews Himself to be perfectly well aware,) was not with a view to the present dissolution of Lazarus, but to convert his

^m St. John iv. 49.

ⁿ St. Matth. viii. 8.

^o St. Matth. ix. 18.

^p Phil. iv. 6.

Death into an occasion of His own Glory. In this respect, the present place deserves to be compared with St. John ix. 3,—on which passage the reader is invited to read what has been already offered. Both the present miracle and that just now alluded to promoted God's Glory in a singular manner by affording such transcendent evidence of His Divinity; and, as a necessary consequence, by convincing so many of the Divinity of CHRIST¹.

'Inseparable,' (says Hilary;) 'is God's honour from the honour of CHRIST. How altogether one and the same they are, may be shewn from this very passage. Lazarus dies for the Glory of God, that *the SON of GOD may be glorified*. What doubt can there be that the Glory of God consists in the Glory of God's SON, since the death of Lazarus, which was conducive to God's Glory, was designed to bring Glory also to the SON of God?'

Take notice that by such words, our LORD prepared the minds of His hearers 'beforehand, as He often did, for some miraculous interposition^r.'

Truly has it been remarked that 'the SON of God, who was glorified through the death of Lazarus, will have His Glory, some how or other, in the death of each of ourselves^s.' . . . *We*, in the meantime, be it observed, have learnt the meaning of language to which even such saints as Martha and her sister were as yet strangers.

¹ See St. John ix. 16: x. 21: xi. 37.—See also below, ver. 45, 48: xii. 11, 17 to 19, and 42.

^r Williams.

^s From a MS. Sermon by the Rev. E. Hobhouse.

When their messengers returned to Bethany, as doubtless they did at once, with these words on their lips,—how enigmatical must the message have sounded in the ears of the sisters! ‘This sickness not unto death:’ nay, but Lazarus has been already dead for one whole day! And what can their mighty Friend mean by the event being intended ‘for the Glory of God: that the Son of God might be glorified thereby?’ . . . It will be found suggested below, (in the note on verse 40,) that Martha asked concerning this matter, as soon as she came into our SAVIOUR’s presence.

Now JESUS loved Martha, and her sister, 5 and Lazarus.

‘I love those that love Me,’ (saith the SPIRIT;) and those that seek Me early shall find Me*.’

Well may such a statement be exhibited by itself, and occupy a separate verse! What a world of blessedness is implied in those few words! How many acts of unutterable condescension on the part of Him whose ways, at the birthday of Creation, caused the very morning-stars to sing together, and the sons of God to shout for joy! On the part of the little family of Bethany, how much of reverence and gratitude, as well as singleness and purity of heart! . . . Let those who have presumed to think of Martha as of one engrossed with domestic cares, to the neglect of her

* Prov. viii. 17.

▪ Job xxxviii. 7.

spiritual condition, consider what is implied by the statement, '*JESUS loved Martha.*'—We make wondrous free with God's saints. It is 'unbelieving Thomas,' (!) and 'busy Martha,' (!) More complaisant to ourselves, we do not hesitate to assert that we have given our 'mite,' when we have cast into the offerings of God so paltry a sum that we are literally ashamed to say how small it was'.

Take notice, by the way, that though our SAVIOUR loved these two sisters and their brother Lazarus, yet the first were at this time drowned in sorrow; the last, sick nigh unto death. '*Whom the LORD loveth,*' therefore, '*He chasteneth*': and of this we are careful to remind our sick, when we visit them with the consolations of our Holy Religion^v. To remind *us* of it, may have been one of the Evangelist's reasons for mentioning the SAVIOUR's *love* for the little family of Bethany.

- 6 When He had heard therefore that he was sick, He abode two days still in the same place where He was.

As already explained, at Bethabara, on the eastern side of the Jordan. We can but entreat attention to the progress of the sacred narrative. Here was no want of Love towards the sick man, or his relations: on the contrary, '*JESUS loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus.*' We are not left to draw inferences: the fact is expressly stated.

^v See the note on St. Mark xii. 41.

^x Heb. xii. 6.

^y See the Communion of the Sick.

either was Prayer wanting : for the messengers Martha and Mary, though they asked nothing, knew clearly enough what was the longing desire of their souls. Notwithstanding all this our SAVIOUR is found to remain 'two days still in the same place where He was.' In the meantime, Lazarus, from being ill, actually dies, and is buried!

. . Now all these things 'were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort in the Scriptures might have Hope'.

A pious writer remarks : 'To faithful suppliants, there is no better sign than for their prayers not to be soon answered, for it is a pledge of greater good in store. The conduct of our LORD is the sensible embodying to our sight of what we experience in the ways of His Providence. In the family which JESUS loved, one is dying, the other not in distress. They omit no means of obtaining the Divine aid. They are heard by Him who is as if He heard not : He waits, and for two days loves not, nor deigns them any consoling reply. And this, not for want of Love, but from the greatness of His Love towards them. This, as it is a matter of familiar occurrence, so is it often alluded to throughout the Scriptures. 'Shall not God avenge His own elect, which cry day and night unto Him, though He bear long with them? I tell you that He will avenge them speedily^a.' And yet from beneath the Altar, they cry 'How long?'^b'

^a Rom. xv. 4.

^b St. Luke xviii. 7, 8.

^c Williams, quoting Rev. vi. 10.



place where He was,' and then set any. On arriving, He found that been *four days* dead and buried^c. No any to Bethabara is found to have single day's journey. Lazarus n have been at his last extremity wh sent to CHRIST. The very same t served in the case of the Noblema the daughter of Jaïrus^e. Is it not : we see happening around us, of wh ourselves, every day? When all besi when help from every other quarte: we bethink ourselves of *Him* ! . . . also often reserve His aid until all have failed ; as if to remind us th extremity is God's opportunity ?

' 7 Then after that saith He to *E*

His Disciples say unto Him, Master, the Jews of late sought to stone Thee; and goest thou thither again?

They allude evidently to the transaction recorded in chapter x. 31 to 39. Take notice that the word translated 'of late,' (literally '[but] now,' '[just] now^s,') indicates that the attempt to slay our LORD had been of very recent occurrence. But we know that the Feast of Dedication, about which time it happened, was in December; and will have been at our *Epiphany* Season therefore that our LORD will have *manifested forth His Glory* by the Raising of Lazarus^h.

JESUS answered, Are there not twelve hours in the day? If any man walk in the day, he stumbleth not, because he seeth the light of this world.

Mysterious words! which recal His sayings immediately before He bestowed sight on the man born blindⁱ; and which require to be interpreted in somewhat the same manner as those sayings. Indeed the two places singularly resemble and illustrate one another. When He mentions 'The light of this World,' the Sun of Righteousness is speaking of His visible emblem in the Heavens.

The words before us may perhaps be paraphrased

alfof St. John iv. 50. Consider also the following places,—Gen. xii. 4: xl. 20: xli. 1: xlii. 17, 18. St. Luke ii. 46. Acts ix. 9.

^s As in St. John xxi. 10. ^h Consider St. John ii. 11: xi. 4, 40.

ⁱ See St. John ix. 4, 5, and the notes there.

somewhat as follows:—‘Are there not in the Day twelve hours of Light^k?’ (for the Jews divided the period between sunrise and sunset into twelve equal parts,—whatever the season of the year:) ‘and until the last of those twelve hours has run out, is it not certain that Darkness cannot overtake a man? None can stumble for want of Light, so long as any part of the appointed period of sunshine remains.—Just so is it with respect to Myself. The period fixed in the counsels of God, for the duration of the Ministry of the Son of Man, hath not yet expired. ‘Mine hour is not yet come.’ It is ‘the eleventh hour’ with Me, indeed, but there yet remains to Me one full hour more. Learn therefore that your present fears for My personal safety are groundless.’ . . . The place may be usefully compared with St. Luke xiii. 32, 33,—where the fixed period of our SAVIOUR’S Ministry is in like manner indicated by the mention of ‘to-day, and to-morrow, and the day following.’

Such seems the literal sense of what was spoken: but it is obvious that a spiritual meaning lies beneath the surface of the letter. Hence, the parabolical character of the language employed:—‘the Day,’ ‘twelve hours,’ ‘walking,’ ‘stumbling,’ ‘the light of this World.’ Could any one indeed desire a better commentary on our LORD’S hidden meaning than what He Himself supplies by His words on a subsequent occasion, in reply to the

^k Our Version gives the exact meaning of the original here, though it does not appear to do so. The same, of verses 25, 26.

quiry of the people, 'Who is this Son of Man?' Hear His answer:—'Then JESUS said unto them, that a little while is THE LIGHT with you. *Walk while ye have THE LIGHT, lest Darkness come on you:* for he that walketh in Darkness knoweth not whither he goeth. While ye have THE LIGHT, believe in THE LIGHT, that ye may be the Children of Light!.' 'I, LIGHT, came into the World *that every one who believeth in Me, should not abide in Darkness*^m.' 'As long as I am in the World, I am the Light of the World'ⁿ. . . These sayings are enough to vindicate for our LORD's present Discourse the same breadth of meaning which was aimed for St. John ix. 4, 5, in the note on the latter of those two verses. They prepare us in fact for the turn which the thought immediately takes.

But if a man walk in the night, he stum- 10
eth, because there is no light in him.

By which words, attention is directed from the speaker to His Disciples, and to the Jewish nation generally. It is not so much a new thought which is here brought forward, as the practical application to our LORD's hearers of the Divine saying which went before; which is here brought out and applied. The beloved Disciple will be found to refer to these words of his LORD in 1 St. John ii. 9, 11: while many a passage in the writings of

^l Compare St. Luke xvi. 8.

^m St. John xii. 35, 36, 46.

ⁿ St. John ix. 5.

the Apostles of CHRIST explain the spiritual force of the expression 'to stumble'.^o Concerning the phrase 'there is no Light in him,' it may suffice to refer the reader to St. Matthew vi. 22, 23.

Before passing on to another subject, the reader is invited to consider the fearful significance which the present sayings of our LORD give to that well-known expression of His, — 'This is your hour and the Power of Darkness^p,' spoken at the time of His apprehension in the garden: also, to the Evangelist's remark, on occasion of the departure of Judas, — 'Now, it was night^q:' and, not least of all, to the darkness which covered 'all the Land' at the eclipse of 'the True Light' upon the Cross.

- 1 These things said He: and after that He saith unto them, Our friend Lazarus sleepeth; but I go, that I may awake him out of sleep.

Take notice how He includes them all with Himself, as friends of Lazarus: '*Our friend Lazarus.*' Yet more, take notice that death is in God's sight but a *sleep*. Now, from all sleeping there must be a waking; so that in this very term is contained the doctrine of the Resurrection. The same remarks were suggested by our SA-

^o See St. Matthew xviii. 7, 8, (compare v. 29 &c.) Romans ix. 32: xiv. 21. 1 St. Pet. ii. 8. Consider likewise St. Luke ii. 34, and 1 Cor. i. 23.

^p St. Luke xxii. 53.

^q St. John xiii. 30.

^r St. Matth. xxvii. 45.

JOHN'S declaration concerning the daughter of *Lazarus*, 'The maiden is not dead, *but sleepeth*.*'

This way of regarding Death is not peculiar to the Gospel, as some have thought. See the references at the end of the note on St. Mark v. 39. It is true, however, that what was only the language of exalted Faith under the Old Covenant, is the ordinary speech of believers under the New†.

Then said His Disciples, LORD, if he sleep, 12] we shall do well.

As much as to say, 'If it be indeed merely a state of lethargy into which our friend has fallen, we are safe, and will get well; nor can it be needful that Thou shouldest go down to the scene of danger, in person.' Or they may have meant that the sleep of Lazarus was a sign that he was on the road to recovery. Either way, their speech is dissuasive: and recalls what we meet with in St. Matthew xvi. 22. It reveals also a thing which the Evangelist has not yet mentioned,—namely, that our LORD'S Disciples knew that Lazarus was *ill*.

Howbeit JESUS spake of his death: but 13] they thought that He had spoken of taking of rest in sleep.

On this, (as on so many other occasions,) we are

* See the notes on St. Matth. ix. 24 and St. Mark v. 39.

† See St. Matthew xxvii. 52. Acts vii. 60: xiii. 36. 1 Cor. xi. 0: xv. 6, 18, 20, 51. 1 Thess. iv. 13, 14, 15. 2 St. Pet. iii. 4.

struck by the childlike manner in which holy men are found to receive the saying of the Lord. They evidently interpreted the *most literal* manner possible. Consider the marks on His injunction to 'beware of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees'—His declaration 'I have meat to eat, that ye know of^x,'—on His admonition that he that has the sword should sell his garment and buy

- 14 Then said JESUS unto them plazarus is dead.

Compare St. John x. 24: xvi. 29. He adds,—'But I go that I may raise Him fr

- 15 And I am glad for your sakes that I am not there, to the intent ye may believe

Clearly implying, (as will be found in the note on ver. 32,) that Lazarus—*could* not have died,—had the Lord been present.

'Instead of raising up Lazarus from the dead as they whom He loved had desired, that by this miracle to be raised up together with Lazarus unto the life of Faith, which is to die^a.' And here the progressive nature of Faith—its several degrees, and the accession of grace—it is capable,—is much to be noticed.

^x St. Matth. xvi. 6 to 12, &c.

^a St. Luke xxii. 36, 38.

^y St. John i.

^a Williams

water made wine, at Cana of Galilee, 'His Disciples believed on Him^b;' and after the stilling of the storm on the Lake, all worshipped Him, with the confession 'Thou art the SON of GOD^c.' Simon Peter twice confessed Him as the 'CHRIST, the SON of the living GOD^d;' and we have already heard Matthew say, 'I believe that Thou art the CHRIST, the SON of GOD, which should come into the world^e.' Yet, *because of their unbelief*, it was that nine of the Apostles were unable to heal the lunatic boy: they had not 'faith as a grain of mustard seed.' 'O thou of little faith!' exclaimed our SAVIOUR to Simon Peter^f. 'Have faith in GOD^h,' was His word to the Twelve after cursing the Fig-tree: and Lazarus is now to be raised from the dead to the intent *they 'may believe.'* . . . Our SAVIOUR adds,—

nevertheless let us go unto him.

Then said Thomas, which is called Didy- 16
mus, unto his fellow-disciples, Let us also go,
that we may die with Him.

We know very little about the Apostle Thomasⁱ, who, (as St. John thrice remarks,) was called 'Didymus' by the Greeks as he was called 'Tho-

^b St. John ii. 11.

^c St. Matth. xiv. 33.

^d St. Matth. xvi. 16.

^e See below, verse 27.

^f St. Matth. xvii. 19, 20.

^g St. Matth. xiv. 31.

^h St. Mark xi. 22.

ⁱ See a short notice of him in the commentary on St. Mark iii. 18,—p. 78.

maa' by the Hebrews^j. He comes prominently before us on only three occasions, of which this is the first^k: but from 'the very expressive indications which the Gospels supply, we have sufficient materials to enable us to conceive his character. He appears to have been a man of earnest mind, capable of strong and disinterested attachments; but of that temperament which looks habitually to the darker side of things; which, out of several future events equally possible, is ever disposed to consider the least welcome as the most probable, and to distrust extraordinary good news all the more from the circumstance of its being good. This habit of mind we find strongly exemplified on the present occasion. The Twelve, with one accord, deprecate our LORD's self-exposure to the powerful enemies in the capital who had so lately threatened Him with stoning: and doubtless those of the number who shared in any degree the sanguine temper of their chief member,—his willing disbelief of the possibility of the LORD's subjection to shame and death,—must have remonstrated in the hope either that their dissuasions would be effectual; or that their LORD, if He chose to brave the danger, would by His experienced power surmount it. But not so thinks Thomas. He is the first to recognise the adverse determination of his

^j Namely, in St. John xi. 16: xx. 24: xxi. 2: for the Evangelist is not here *translating* the Hebrew word, and explaining that it means 'Twin.'

^k The other two being St. John xiv. 5, and xx. 24 to 29.

Master, and while perceiving, despairingly to acquiesce in it; and he says immediately to his fellow-disciples,—‘Let us also go, that we may die with Him:’ thus uniting with a feeling of entire self-devotion, the anticipation that the worst must follow; that in the death of their beloved Master, all hope was gone; and that it was well for them who had contentedly shared His fortunes hitherto, to perish also contentedly with Him by the hands of His triumphant enemies.’*

Chrysostom points out that he who now scarcely dared to go to Bethany in company with his Lord, afterwards fearlessly traversed the whole East without Him, in the midst of those who sought his death. St. Thomas is the Apostle of India.

Then when Jesus came, He found that 17
He had *lain* in the grave four days already.

Of this, we are twice reminded¹. Four days! a hopeless period: one day more than the third day, which is the day of Resurrection! The appointed days of ‘weeping’ were ended: those of ‘lamentation’ had begun! Dying on the very day when the sisters had sent to our SAVIOUR, (who was distant about one day’s journey from Bethany,) in consequence of the two days still spent at Bethabara, Lazarus will have now been dead four days; and since it was usual with the Jews to inter their dead on the day of death^m, he will

* Dr. W. H. Mill. . . ¹ See verse 39. ^m Acts v. 6 to 10.

have 'been four days in the grave' also. From this verse, would it not seem as if our SAVIOUR, on reaching the outskirts of the village, had been *told* by some one of what had befallen His friend?

- 18 Now Bethany was nigh unto Jerusalem,
19 about fifteen furlongs off: and many of the Jews came to Martha and Mary, to comfort them concerning their brother.

Rather, '*had come* to Martha and Mary:' yet chiefly to comfort *Mary*. Consider verses 31 and 45.—The nature of the errand thus alluded to, will be found noticed below, in the latter part of the note on verse 46. The office of the comforters, (like that of the mourners^a on such occasions), had grown a miserable piece of lifeless formalism. The days of grief were fixed at thirty; of which it was prescribed that the three first should be for weeping, the next seven for lamentation, and so forth. More than one Jewish treatise is extant on this subject. Happily for the sisters, a better Comforter was already on the way to their dwelling!

By stating that the village of Bethany was scarcely two miles distant from the capital, St. John, (who writes for strangers, as already often pointed out,) seems to explain how it happened that 'many of the Jews' were enabled to come on the pious errand here described. . . . 'So entirely

^a See the note on St. Mark v. 38.

• See the notes on St. John ii, 6 and vi. 1.

was it a scene of mourning! as in a family where leath and the funeral are passed^{p.}'

Then Martha, as soon as she heard that 20 JESUS was coming, went and met Him: but Mary sat *still* in the house.

Some one seems to have come in advance, in order to warn the sisters of the approach of their Divine Friend. Martha, (probably because the tidings were first conveyed to herself,) hastens to receive Him; and meets Him, (as we learn from ver. 30,) outside the village. There, the ensuing dialogue takes place. Mary in the meantime, with characteristic calmness, is sitting still in the house. Surely the act of either sister is equally lovely! If the repose and sanctity of Mary's course affects the heart most, who does not feel the blessedness of Martha in thus going forth to meet her LORD and ours! 'To meet a friend coming to us in our affliction, is something,' (says the pious writer last quoted :) 'but this meeting was with such feeling as none can know but they who beheld in the flesh Him who raised the dead.'

Then said Martha unto JESUS, LORD, if 21 Thou hadst been here, my brother had not died.

And so presently said Mary,—as will be found in ver. 32, where see the note. It is striking to observe that our SAVIOUR also, in effect, had said

the same thing, when His friend's sickness first reported to Him: for *what* was implied in the words, 'I am glad for your sakes that thou art not there,'—if not the admission that in the case of Lazarus 'Lazarus had not died?' . . . Martha proceeds

22 But I know, that even now, what Thou wilt ask of God, God will give Thee.

What may the pious woman have meant? That CHRIST could give her back her brother now? It does indeed seem that she meant no less. But faith itself breaks down when the trial of faith comes on; for consider her words in verse 39. . . . Observe however that even yet she does not sever in the lowly course which we recognize both the sisters at first as pursuing: namely, she makes no *request*.

Meantime, the weak point in her confidence is clearly is that she does not recognise CHRIST as GOD. Whatsoever He might ask of God, be assured that God *would give Him*: but that is more than is promised to every one of our race. She does not know that He and the FATHER are *One*:¹ that whosoever seeth *Him*, hath seen the FATHER. And yet, had He not declared Himself by His message to the sisters in verse 4?

Even that faithful saying,—'LORD, if Thou

¹ St. Matth. xxi. 22. St. John xiv. 13, 14: xv. 7, 23, 24.

been here,'—discovers a want of Faith. Is CHRIST therefore 'mighty to save' only when *present*?

JESUS saith unto her, Thy brother shall 23 rise again.

By which words, He begins to prepare her, (as His Divine manner ever was,) for the miracle which was to follow. The afflicted woman, however, regards His Divine words as merely conveying the usual language of consolation,—like that which St. Paul addressed to the Thessalonians^r.

Martha saith unto Him, I know that he 24 shall rise again in the Resurrection at the Last Day.

Whereby she seems to imply that she had dared to hope for something more. 'In the Resurrection, at the Last Day, *all* must rise. I *know* that he will rise *then*!' . . . Are we perhaps at liberty to suspect that our LORD Himself had been her Teacher here? or may we presume, (on the strength of Job xix. 25,) that the same hope was confidently entertained by the best informed of the Jewish nation in general?

JESUS said unto her, I am the Resurrec- 25 tion and the Life :

Blessed words! and rightly chosen to be the first which shall greet the mourner's ear when he enters the place of graves! Shall we ever listen to

^r 1 Thess. iv. 13 to 18.

them without considering the occasion on which they were first spoken, and calling to mind the largeness of the bliss of which they were the solemn, aye, the *immediate* precursors?

‘I am the Resurrection and the Life,’ saith our LORD: and by taking again the life which He had already laid down, He *proved His right* to that title^a. He is ‘*the Resurrection*,’ because He is the sole cause of Resurrection to us. ‘As in Adam all die, even so in CHRIST shall all be made alive!’ ‘For since by man came Death, by man came also the Resurrection of the dead^a.’ ‘Doth any man doubt,’ (asks Hooker,) ‘but that even from the flesh of CHRIST our very bodies do receive that life which shall make them glorious at the latter day?’ . . . He also is ‘*the Life*,’ because our only true life is derived from Him,—of whom it is said, ‘in Him was *Life*^a:’ and ‘as the FATHER hath Life in Himself, so hath He given to the SON to have *Life in Himself*^a.’ Hence, in another place, our LORD says,—‘I am the Way, the Truth, and the *Life*^a;’ St. Peter calls Him ‘the Prince,’ (or ‘Author,’) ‘of *Life*^a;’ and the Apostle Paul declares, ‘When CHRIST, *who is our Life*, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory^b.’ . . . It was implied, therefore, on the present occasion,—What need to wait for ‘the Last Day,’ when *He* stands before thee who is more than the cause of

^a So Bp. Pearson.

^a 1 Cor. xv. 22.

^a 1 Cor. xv. 21.

^a St. John i. 4.

^a St. John v. 26.

^a St. John xiv. 6.

^a Acts iii. 15.

^b Coloss. iii. 4.

Resurrection to others: yea, who is the very Resurrection and the Life itself?

Martha had said, 'I know that whatsoever Thou wilt ask of God, God will give it Thee.' Our LORD makes answer:

he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth 26 and believeth in Me shall never die.

The first clause was evidently designed to bear a twofold meaning. The believer in CHRIST, though he suffer dissolution, yet shall surely rise again from Death, and live with CHRIST for ever. Even so 'God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were *dead in sins*, hath quickened us together with CHRIST^c.' Of the Prodigal son it is declared in like manner that 'he *was dead*, and *is alive again*^d.'

The second clause of the sentence however claims for itself nothing but a spiritual interpretation. Whosoever lives that Life which alone in God's sight deserves the name of living,—(the Life of Faith in the Incarnate SON,)—this man shall never die: that is, he shall know nothing of that 'second Death^e' which alone deserves the name of dying. These two sayings are therefore an expansion of the declaration which went before,—'I am *the Resurrection and the Life*.'

^c Eph. ii. 45.

^d St. Luke xv. 24,—where see note.

^e Rev. ii. 11: xx. 6, 14: xxi. 8; and consider xxi. 4.

And here, we may not fail to remind the reader how 'exceedingly little is said in the New Testament about *Death*. CHRIST is declared to have '*abolished*' it^f; and accordingly, it almost disappears from the Christian scheme: *the Coming of CHRIST* being the topic which takes its place.' 'The two *natural* eras of our being,—our Birth and our Death,—are not the *Christian* eras. All things are become new to us. Our span is different; our points are different. We begin with the Sacrament of our New Birth, when CHRIST gives us His grace: we end with that hour when He shall come' to take unto Him His elect, and to reign^g. . . . 'Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth My word, and believeth on Him that sent Me, *hath everlasting Life*, and shall not come into condemnation; but *is passed from Death unto Life*^h.' How glorious an intimation from the very 'Prince of Life'!ⁱ See the beginning of the note on St. Luke xvi. 9. . . . To each one of us, as well as to Martha, He addresses the solemn question which follows:—

Believest thou this?

For this sublime doctrine was more than Martha had yet professed her belief in.

Take notice that our SAVIOUR, who can do nothing where there is not Faith^k, requires a con-

^f 2 Tim. i. 10.

^g From a MS. sermon by the Rev. C. P. Eden (17th Dec. 1854).

^h St. John v. 24.

ⁱ Acts iii. 15.

^k St. Matth. xiii. 58.

mission from Martha before He raises Lazarus from the grave; as He required a confession from the Twelve before He suffered three of their number to behold His Transfiguration¹. . . . 'Believe that I am able to do this?'—He asked of the two blind men who followed Him crying for mercy^m. 'If thou canst believe,'—was His saying to the father of the lunatic childⁿ, before He proceeded to cast out the dumb and deaf spirit.

She saith unto Him, Yea, LORD: I believe that Thou art the CHRIST, the SON of GOD, which should come into the World.

A marvellous confession, truly; and, *implicitly*, all that could be wished for; yet does it not appear to have been the *explicit* confession which our SAVIOUR had required of her. So thought Chrysostom; who remarks,—'She seems not to have understood His words. She saw that He meant something great, but did not see what it was. She is asked one thing and answers another.' Yet observe her language, 'Yea, LORD,' she begins; '*I have believed*;' thereby, as it would seem, expressing what had long been the abiding conviction of her soul; and she proceeds to declare her full belief in our LORD's Divinity. Augustine, accordingly, understands her to imply,—'When I believed that Thou wert the SON of God, I believed also

¹ Consider St. Matth. xvi. 15, 16, and xvii. 1, 2.

^m St. Matth. ix. 28.

ⁿ St. Mark ix. 23.

that Thou wert the Resurrection, and that Thou wert the Life:’ and that ‘he that believeth in Thee, though he die, yet shall he live.’ . . . ‘The Anointed,’—‘the SON of God,’—‘He that should come^k,’—she names Him by three of His great Names. Yet have we heard her, in ver. 22, ascribe to Him the conduct of a created being!

It will, in fact, have struck every intelligent reader of the Gospel with some surprise that persons capable of such magnificent confessions as we sometimes meet with, should *practically* have shewn that they entertained very erroneous, or very unworthy notions of our LORD. This circumstance, however, need not cause perplexity. Assisted by the Creeds and Confessions of the Church Catholic, the meanest among us (blessed be God for it!) are now enabled to reason aright concerning our SAVIOUR: but in the days of MESSIAH, it was not so. The Incarnation,—that great ‘mystery of godliness^l,’—as it was the fruitful parent of most of the early heresies, so might it well prove a difficulty in the way of every individual believer; leaving Reason far behind, and tasking Faith itself beyond its utmost unassisted powers.

- 28 And when she had so said, she went her way, and called Mary her sister secretly, saying, The Master is come, and calleth for thee.

^k The reader is referred to the note on St. Matth. xi. 3.

^l 1 Tim. iii. 16.

Is it not perhaps rather,—‘secretly saying?’ Martha seems to have retraced her steps; called her sister Mary aside; and privately to have poured the blissful message into her ear. Martha found her sitting among those members of her own nation who had come to comfort the sisters,—as may be gathered from verses 19, 29 and 31, where see the note. The prescribed rule on such occasions was that the ‘comforters’ sat in silence upon the floor, till the mourner spoke.

The word here, and generally elsewhere, translated ‘Master,’ rather implies a ‘Teacher.’ But this is in fact the nearest Greek equivalent to the Hebrew ‘Rabbi,’ as St. John informs us in chapter 38. By this name, the little family at Bethany were found to have designated our LORD in conversation with one another.

Take notice that it is not actually *recorded* that our SAVIOUR asked for Mary. That He ‘called her,’ we learn from these words of her sister. In this way many little circumstances, perhaps unsuspected by careless readers, are revealed both in the Old and New Testaments. A few examples of this are set down at foot of the page; which it may be found worth while to refer toⁿ. Indeed,

ⁿ E. g. in the Old Testament:—Gen. xxxi. 30, (of which ‘sore angling’ we had no hint given us between xxix. 20 and xxx. 43.) Gen. xlii. 21, (which ‘anguish’ and ‘beseeching’ was not even alluded to in xxxvii. 21 to 28.) Gen. xliii. 7, (which earnest inquiries on the part of Joseph, concerning his father and brother, were passed over in perfect silence between xlii. 7 and 26.) Gen.

one other saying of our blessed LORD, on this same occasion, though not recorded in its historical place, is discoverable from a subsequent part of the present chapter; and is so related there, as even to suggest a further portion of Martha's dialogue with our SAVIOUR. See below, the note on ver. 40.

But to return to the narrative. Mary is told that our LORD has asked for her :—

- 29 As soon as she heard *that*, she arose quickly, and came unto Him.

The Evangelist will be found *twice* to notice the promptness with which Mary obeyed our LORD's summons. Such a circumstance may be thought to make the supposition the more probable, that she had not before been aware of His approach. It has been thought that Martha's more active habits had put her in the way of hearing the rumour of that event before her sister. The objection to this supposition is, that it seems unlikely that Martha would have kept our LORD's

xliv. 19 to 23, (where a few more particulars of the same interview are revealed.) Gen. xlv. 27 to 29, (where more of Jacob's words are related than in Gen. xliii. 7.) Hosea xii. 4, (which 'weeping' and 'supplication' is not mentioned in Gen. xxxii. 24 to 26.) Deut. iii. 25, 26, (which prayer, together with its rejection, is nowhere else even alluded to.)—In the New Testament :—St. John i. 20 reveals that the unrecorded inquiry of the 'Priests and Levites from Jerusalem' was 'Art Thou the CHRIST?' St. John v. 36 mentions a thing as said before, yet not recorded. Hebrews v. 7 relates a circumstance of our LORD's Passion which none of the Evangelists had particularly mentioned.

arrival a secret from her sister: while His *summons* would fully explain the alacrity with which Mary at last went forth to meet Him.

Now JESUS was not yet come into the town, but was in that place where Martha met Him.

This is divinely contrived. (What is not divinely contrived which CHRIST contrives?) By remaining without, somewhere near the burial-ground we may suppose, (which was always outside the town,) the whole company of Mary's comforters, following *her*, are brought to *Him*. As it follows:

The Jews then which were with her in the house, and comforted her, when they saw Mary, that she rose up hastily and went out, followed her, saying, She goeth unto the grave to weep there.

They attribute to a sudden pang of grief, Mary's sudden rising; and, as might be expected, rise and follow her, weeping like herself^p. . . . Such as the mournful company which the Apostles must have beheld approaching them, as they stood with our SAVIOUR at the entrance of Bethany, outside the village. And thus had the providence of God overruled it, that a multitude

• Compare St. Luke vii. 12. ^p This appears from ver. 33.

from the capital should witness the great wonder which was to follow; while yet the publicity which would have attended the miracle, if wrought within the capital itself, was avoided. . . . For the inhabitants of Jerusalem, a yet greater miracle was in store. CHRIST *will raise Himself* from death, at the end of two or three months from this time.

- 32 Then when Mary was come where JESUS was, and saw Him, she fell down at His feet, saying unto Him, LORD, if Thou hadst been here, my brother had not died.

‘And *saw* Him.’ How numerous and delicate are the touches in these divine Narratives!

Martha, it may be, had fallen at His feet likewise: but it is not so stated. Whatever the *actions* of the two sisters may have been, their *words* on coming into our SAVIOUR’S presence are found to be *identical*,—clearly revealing what had been a constant saying between them ever since their brother’s death: ‘If the Master had but been here, Lazarus had not died!’ Is it not promised, ‘If two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of My FATHER which is in Heaven?’

As already hinted, our LORD’S saying before He set out for Bethany, (‘I am glad for your sakes that I was not there,’) is a proof that Mary and

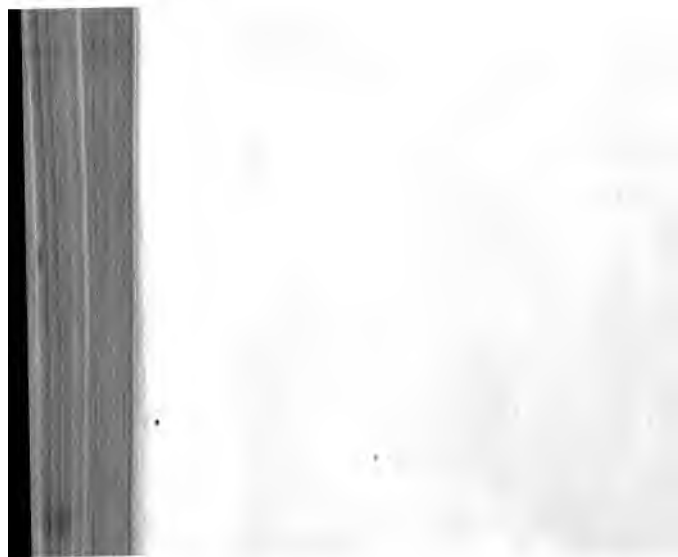
* St. Matthew xviii. 19.

† See above, ver. 15.



LORD, IF THOU HADST BEEN HERE, MY BROTHER HAD NOT DIED.

St. John xi. 32.



her sister were right when they expressed their belief that Lazarus would not have died had *He* been with them: and what a striking revelation does this afford as to what was usual where our LORD was! What a blissful experience do the sisters seem to have enjoyed of the consequence of CHRIST's presence! They say,—‘LORD, while Thou wast with us, no sickness dared shew itself in a family with which the Life deigned to take up His abode.’ . . . None can have ever applied to Him in faith for the relief of disease, and have been refused. He had come into the world ‘that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the Devil’. ‘In Him was Life’: and, by consequence, where He was, there Death could not enter!

When JESUS therefore saw her weeping, 33 and the Jews also weeping which came with her, He groaned in the spirit, and was troubled.

Literally, ‘and troubled Himself.’ This was when He ‘saw’ their tears. See above, on verse 32.—The word in the original for ‘groaning,’ (here and in verse 38,) is a term of large and portentous meaning, and of rather rare occurrence. It conveys the notion of exceeding wrath, which breaks forth into threatening; but it is difficult at first sight to find scope for such notions here,—un-

• Alcuin.

• Heb. ii. 14.

• St. John i. 4.

less we suppose the Holy One to be thus deeply stirred at the sight of the usurped empire of His great enemy, the Devil. Truly, the thoughts of the CREATOR while He dwelt in the flesh among His creatures must have been of a nature which we may not hope to fathom. We can but avail ourselves of every hint; and with dutifulness and gratitude follow it out into its lawful consequences. Thus, when we read that, at the sight of bereavement and sorrow,—tears and groans,—the Incarnate Son was agitated with a mighty *anger*,—an indignation which threatened to break out into some external manifestation of its intensity,—it seems impossible to resist the suspicion that it was the sight of the fair work of Creation so shamefully marred and disfigured, which stirred up the awful wrath of the Most High. ‘An enemy hath done this!’—He seems to say. And indeed, what is every scene of suffering but the work of Sin,—the remote consequences of the Fall,—signs of an usurped dominion over beings destined for happiness, and innocence, and immortality?... The Evangelist further declares that our LORD ‘was troubled,’—

34 and said, Where have ye laid him?

Do we not seem to feel that these words are spoken in all the consciousness of superhuman power,—spoken by One who is about to snatch

the prey from the jaws of the spoiler, and vindicate His own empire over Death itself; a solemn earnest of His intended destruction, in the end, of *that* enemy also?^a

He asked therefore, (as on so many other occasions^a;) not as *needing* to be informed; but as desiring to arrest the attention of the bystanders, and to direct special notice to what He was about to do. Thus, before converting Moses' wand into a serpent, He is found to have inquired, — 'What is that in thy hand^b?'

Athanasius has some good remarks on this subject. 'Ignorance,' (he says,) 'is proper to Humanity: in Godhead, it can have no place. Take notice that our LORD, though He asked 'where they had laid Lazarus?' had already declared, while a long way off, the *death* of Lazarus. Nay, this is He who knew beforehand the thoughts of His disciples, and who read what was in the heart of each, and knew what was in Man^c. Above all, He alone knoweth the FATHER^d; and saith of Himself, 'I am in the FATHER, and the FATHER in Me^e.''

They said unto Him, LORD, come and see.

They who are able to repress the outward display

^a See 1 Cor. xv. 26.

^b E. g. St. Matth. xvi. 13. St. Mark ix. 21; vi. 38. St. Luke xiii. 30, 45. St. John vi. 6, &c.

^c Exod. iv. 2. ^e St. John ii. 25.

^d St. Matth. xi. 27. ^e St. John xiv. 11.

^d St. Matth.

of their grief, while suffered to be silent, are often observed to break forth passionately when spoken to, and constrained to make answer. So may it have been the case now: for it is observable that it was after He had drawn from the sorrowful company the invitation to 'come and see' the place where they had laid Lazarus, that something occurred which moved the Son of Man to tears.

15 JESUS wept.

'Himself borne along with, and not seeking to resist, this great tide of sorrow.*' He weeps with those that weep[†],—our pattern in all things! weeps, 'because He is the Fountain of Pity[‡].' Thus hath He sanctified our sorrows, and associated on such occasions our very tears! For the word here is '*Jesus shed tears*,'—an expression confined to this single place in the Gospel.

Amazing proof of the perfection of either nature, the Divine and human, in the One Person of our LORD, that He should have shed tears of human sympathy even when He was about to assert His empire over Death and Hell[§]! His 'suffering humanity is as marked throughout this occasion as the power of His Godhead.' Indeed, Chrysostom observes that 'St. John, who enters into higher statements respecting our LORD's

* Trench.

† Rom. xii. 15.

‡ Aleuin.

§ See the first note on St. Matth. viii. 10: St. Luke viii. 21. Also the notes on St. Luke vii. 13: St. Mark iii. 5; viii. 3, &c.

nature than the other Evangelists, descends also lower than any other in describing His bodily affections¹. But this may be doubted¹.

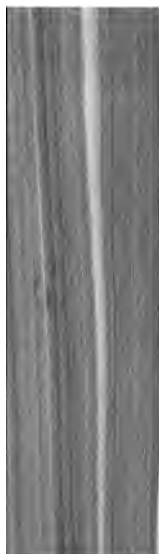
Thrice is our SAVIOUR related to have 'wept'^k. It is not once said of Him that He smiled. And take notice that His tears, recorded in the Gospels, were called forth by the contemplation of human grief. This sign of the compassion of Him who in His unspeakable condescension calls Himself our *Brother*, (at the same time that He is our God!) cannot but prove a source of deepest solace to every afflicted member of the great human family. Our LORD may seem to deal harshly with us, at times; but Love is ever present in all His dispensations. When Joseph, (that most eminent type of CHRIST,) 'took from them Simeon, and found him before their eyes,' is it not expressly declared that he first 'turned himself about from them, and wept'¹?

The name of Joseph indeed suggests the further remark that the saints of God are all described, and Joseph in particular,) as men of tears. It is believed that the passages specified at foot will be found worth referring to, in connexion with this mention of the tears of the Son of Man^m.

¹ Williams. ¹ Consider St. Luke xxii. 44.
 the present place, St. Luke xix. 41, and Heb. v. 7.

^k Besides
¹ Gen.

^m Thus Jacob, Gen. xxix. 11: xxxiii. 4: xxxvii. 35.—Joseph, Gen. xlii. 24: xliii. 30: xlv. 2, 14, 15: xlv. 29: l. 1, 17.—David, 1 Sam. xx. 41: 2 Sam. iii. 32: xii. 21, 22: xv. 30: xviii.



very plainly done a little further
present miracle was beheld by two
of persons, whose respective charac
by prominently brought out. A
observed, is one of the effects ca
to attend every greater manifesta
of Man. He had come into the
thoughts of many hearts might be
stances of which, well worthy of th
tion, will be found in the followin
present Gospel,—chap. vii. 12, als
16 ; and x. 19 to 21. See also the
ix. 39, and the concluding note on
was for ever separating the Light
ness. Accordingly, what next foll
a murmur on the part of some.

37 And some of them said, C

‘There is a depth of truth in these words which they who asked the question little knew of. True it was that JESUS *could* have stayed the hand of Death as easily as He made the blind to see. But He heeded not to answer in words: He was about to answer in *deeds*, by undoing the work of Death, and calling forth the dead from the grave. None will have doubted that He *could* have caused that that man should not die, if He could bring him back again from the dead. And all this was done that He might appear to be *the LORD of the issues of Life and Death*.’

Take notice, by the way, how deep an impression had been made by the miracle performed on the man born blind, as well as how general the knowledge of it had become, that thus, for the second time^q, it should be put prominently forward by the Jews on a public occasion. Compare our LORD’s allusion (in St. John vii. 21,) to His healing of the man at the Pool of Bethesda.

JESUS therefore again groaning in Himself 38 cometh to the grave.

Thus our SAVIOUR’s human sorrow is for the third time noticed^r. The occasion was indeed stupendous, and the scene must have been awfully impressive beyond all words. Are we not to look

^p From a MS. Sermon by the Rev. Edw. Hobhouse.

^q See St. John x. 21; the reference in both places being to St. John ix. 7.

^r Verses 33, 35, 38.

a little onwards, however, and to discover in verses 46 to 53 the main cause of that portentous anguish which now oppressed the Son of Man. Concerning the sepulchre of Lazarus, St. John adds:

It was a cave, and a stone lay upon it.

Take notice, reader, that this little graphic touch, (like so many in the Gospels!) is clearly from the pencil of an eye-witness. The 'cave' may have been a natural formation*; but it was more probably a sepulchral chamber hewn out of the rock. The 'stone,' (as in the case of our SAVIOUR'S Sepulchre,) served the purpose of a door. Still blending the human with the Divine, He who inquired where they had laid Lazarus, and wept on His way to the place, now requires the bystanders to take away the stone which closed the entrance of the sepulchre. As it follows:

9 JESUS said, Take ye away the stone.

One design of this injunction, (as of that in verse 44,) may have been to exclude doubt and unbelief, at every avenue. The Jews are commanded to remove the stone and convince themselves that the body of Lazarus is yet lying within the sepulchre. Presently, they will see him come forth; and then they will be required, with their own hands, to divest him of his grave-clothes, and

* As Gen. xxiii. 9.

* Compare Is. xxii. 16, or St. Matth. xxvii. 60.

to let *him* go. They shall not be able to pretend, as they would fain have done in the case of the man born blind^u, that there is doubt as to the identity of the person raised from death with him who died and was buried. The Jews from Jerusalem, the mourners, the comforters, *all* shall see this miracle; all shall be convinced of its reality in all its parts. The tender sister herself shall remonstrate, and give her terrible reason. As it follows:

Martha, the sister of him that was dead, saith unto Him, LORD, by this time he stinketh: for he hath been *dead* four days.

Rather '[*buried*]' four days.' The circumstance is thus mentioned for the second time^v. She speaks, as knowing what must of necessity have been the case. Her notion of the Divine powers of CHRIST did not extend so far as to suppose that His mighty word could undo at once the work of the Grave, and the work of Death: annihilate Corruption, as well as repair Dissolution.

It may perhaps strike an attentive reader as a strange addition to the name of Martha, that she should be described as 'the sister of him that was dead;' a thing already made so plain by all that has gone before. The truth is, St. John expresses himself somewhat differently. At the command to remove the stone, his words are;—'Saith to Him the sister of the dead.' Then, as

^u St. John ix. 9, 19, 20.

^v See above, ver. 17.

if to make it clear which of the two sisters he is speaking of, he adds,—‘Martha.’

0 Jesus saith unto her, Said I not unto thee, that, if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the Glory of God ?

An unrecorded saying,—as already pointed out in the note on ver. 28; but it sends the reader's eye back to the earlier part of the chapter, to ascertain if any trace of it be discoverable there. Nor is the search altogether fruitless. It will be remembered that our LORD's words to the messengers who brought tidings of His friend's sickness, were,—‘This sickness is not unto death, *but for the Glory of GOD*’^x. This became, in fact, the message which those envoys will have carried back to Bethany. Is it not natural then to suppose that, on our LORD's arrival, Martha will have timidly inquired the meaning of that comfortable, yet most enigmatical saying; and drawn from Him the assurance that if she had Faith, her eyes should *behold* that ‘Glory of God’ of which He had spoken? The reader must forgive such speculations, if they offend him. They are but submitted to his judgment.

It is to be noticed that Martha's very remonstrance was a mark of failing Faith; shewing that she required the timely succour thus mercifully supplied her by our LORD: and which is as when

^x See above, ver. 4.

He stretched forth His hand to save His sinking Apostle on the troubled sea'. . . . In the meantime CHRIST's order has been obeyed:—

Then they took away the stone *from the* 41 *place*, where the dead was laid. And JESUS lifted up *His* eyes, and said, FATHER,

The same gesture of our Divine LORD will be found noticed on other occasions,—as St. Mark vii. 34, and St. John xvii. 1. By directing His eyes to Heaven, He indicated that His FATHER, to whom He addressed His mysterious thanksgiving, was in Heaven.—He said, 'FATHER,'

I thank Thee that Thou hast heard Me.

Words which marvellously indicate the union of the Divine and human nature in the One Person of CHRIST. 'He was heard before He prayed;' (remarks Origen;) 'and therefore He begins with giving thanks: 'FATHER, I thank Thee that Thou hast heard Me.''' '*Before they call, I will answer,*' saith the LORD concerning His saints². 'That is,' (proceeds Chrysostom,) 'there is no difference of will between Me and Thee.' 'Thou hast heard Me,' does not shew any lack of power in Him, or that He is inferior to the FATHER. That the prayer is not really necessary, appears from the words that follow,—

¹ St. Matth. xiv. 31. See also the note on St. Mark v. 36.

² Is. lxxv. 24. See Ps. x. 17.

- 42 And I knew that Thou hearest Me always: but because of the people which stand by I said *if*, that they may believe that Thou hast sent Me.

Rather, 'on account of the multitude which stand around.' See above, the note on ver. 81.—As if He said, 'I need not prayer to persuade Thee; for Ours is one Will.' He hides His meaning on account of the weak faith of His hearers: for God regards not so much His own dignity as our Salvation; and therefore seldom speaks loftily of Himself. Even when He does, He speaks in an obscure way; whereas humble expressions abound in His discourses^a.' Hilary adds,—'He did not therefore need to pray. He prayed for our sakes, that we might know Him to be the Son. His prayer did not benefit Himself, but it benefited our faith. *He* did not want help, but *we* want instruction.'

'I *know* that Thou hearest Me *always*.' Thus the Divine Speaker precludes the derogatory suspicion which the bystanders might have else conceived that He knew not till now that He had been 'heard;' or again, that sometimes He was 'heard,' sometimes not. The intent of all was that 'the people which stood by' might be convinced that 'the FATHER had *sent* Him;' that is, that they 'might see that He was from God, and

^a Chrysostom.

that the miracle which He was about to perform was in accordance with God's Will^b. 'The sense is,' (remarks a living commentator,) "I say not this as though I had doubted whether Thou wouldest hear Me, or not; for 'I know that Thou hearest Me always:' but I have thus thanked Thee openly for the sake of the many witnesses who are present; that they, hearing Me thus address Thee, and seeing the work which I am about to do, 'may believe that Thou hast sent Me,' and that all My works are done according to Thy will^c."

On this great subject, Bp. Pearson writes as follows:—"Whatsoever miracle Moses wrought, he either obtained by his prayers, or else consulting with God, received it by commandment from Him; so that the power of miracles cannot be conceived as inhering in him. Whereas this power must of necessity be in Jesus, 'in whom dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead bodily^d,' and to whom the Father had given 'to have life in Himself^e.' This He sufficiently shewed by working with a word, by commanding the winds to be still, the devils to fly, and the dead to rise. . . . Once indeed CHRIST seemeth to have prayed, before He raised Lazarus from the Grave; but even that was done 'because of the people which stood by.' Not that He had not power within Himself to raise up Lazarus, who was afterwards

^b Chrysostom.

^d Col. ii. 9.

^c Lonsdale and Hale.

^e St. John v. 26.

to raise Himself; but 'that they might believe the FATHER had sent Him.' Chrysostom, in the same spirit, bids us remark that 'He does not say 'In My FATHER's Name, come forth;' or 'FATHER, raise him;' but, throwing off the whole appearance of one praying, He proceeds to shew His power by acts. This is His general way. His words shew humility; His acts power.'

A living writer, whose piety is always edifying, remarks,—'God created Man by a word, without effort: but recalls him to life not without many groans, and tears, and intercessions; amid all around weeping,—samples as it were of the whole Creation groaning and travailing together with pain, waiting for the Redemption^f.'

43 And when He thus had spoken, He cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth.

He 'cried,' that all might notice *Him* as the Author of this mighty miracle.—His 'loud Voice' was like the Voice of the Archangel, and the trump of God, whereat 'the dead in CHRIST shall rise^g,' at the Last Day.—It is *by name* that He calls Lazarus, (says Augustine strikingly,) lest He should bring out *all* the dead. And indeed, He who called, hath a personal knowledge of each. As in life, so in death, '*He calleth them all by their names*^h.'

^f Williams.

^g 1 Thess. iv. 16.

^h See the note on the latter part of St. John x. 3.

Chrysostom points out that our Lord does not say 'Arise,' (as He said to the daughter of Jâirus¹, and to the Widow of Nain's son^k;) but 'Come forth;' 'speaking to the dead as if he were a living person.'—Consider Romans iv. 17.

And he that was dead came forth, bound **44** hand and foot with graveclothes: and his face was bound about with a napkin.

The summons to Lazarus was literally, '*Come out.*' It was a cave; and from its dark recess, at the command of Him who, in the beginning, 'said Let there be light and there was light,'—'he that was dead *came out.*' How fitting an emblem of the hour which 'is coming, . . . when the dead shall hear the Voice of the Son of God; and they that hear shall live;' yea, 'the hour . . . in the which all that are in the graves shall hear His voice, and shall come forth!'. . . 'CHRIST raised the dead in the chamber and in the street, from the bed and from the bier,' (remarks Bp. Pearson;) 'and not content with these smaller demonstrations, proceedeth to the grave. These three Evangelical resuscitations are so many preambulatory proofs of the last and general Resurrection.'

O miracle of miracles! How is it possible to dwell in thought upon the incident thus simply yet strikingly narrated, without a growing sense

¹ St. Mark v. 41.

^k St. Luke vii. 14.

¹ St. John v. 28, 29.

of the unspeakable majesty of the entire transaction? . . . On the one side our SAVIOUR is standing, attended by His Apostles, and doubtless a multitude which has followed the blessed company from beyond the Jordan: on the other, are the sisters, the Jews, and the people of Bethany. The entire assembly have met in the place of graves, outside the town, and form a mighty circle round the tomb of Lazarus^m. The vault in which his dead body had been deposited, is uncovered at the command of Him who, as it is well remembered, has lately 'opened the eyes of the blind.' Expectation is raised to the highest pitch; and the gaze of all is directed towards our SAVIOUR; whom, with uplifted eyes, still exhibiting traces of His Human sorrow, they behold engaged in mysterious intercourse with His FATHER. Then, *with a loud voice* which rings awfully through the silent air, and rivets the attention of every bystander, He cries, 'Lazarus, come out!' Attention is drawn straightway to the darksome chamber of death, to observe what will follow: and lo, to the amazement and consternation of all present, the figure of the dead man comes to view! Lazarus comes forth,—moving as a shrouded corpse may be imagined (but as it was never, except on this one occasion, *seen*) to move,—not only blinded by the napkin which veiled the faceⁿ, but completely

^m See the first words of the note on verse 42.

ⁿ Compare St. John xx. 7.

swathed about with linen bandages also°; or, as it is here expressed, '*bound hand and foot with grave-clothes*;' obedient to the summons of Him whose powerful Voice had penetrated into the very abode of departed spirits, had shaken the powers of the unseen world, and already for the third time burst the bars and broken the gates of the Grave!

The reader will notice that every word here affords evidence of a most attentive eye-witness.

JESUS saith unto them, Loose him, and let him go.

He who rose before the stone was rolled away from the door of His own Sepulchre, could have dispensed with the removal of the stone from the sepulchre of Lazarus. He who could first break the cords of Death which bound him, could have also undone the graveclothes which confined his body. But the Holy One thus provided that as many as chose, should handle Lazarus *at once*, and see that it was he indeed^p. By commanding the bystanders not only to 'loose him' from the bandages of the grave, but also to 'let him go,' (literally, to 'let him *depart*,') it was further provided that all should behold Lazarus moving before them,—alive, and at liberty to withdraw whithersoever he pleased.

° See St. John xix. 40, and Acts v. 6.

^p Alluding to the language of St. Luke xxiv. 39. See above, the note on ver. 39.

The description of the raising of Lazarus, strictly speaking, ends here. Over how much of wonder, how much of interest which must inevitably have followed, does the sacred writer draw a veil!

Can it be necessary, in taking leave of this great transaction, to point out that it was clearly symbolical throughout,—emblematic, that is, of the restoration of a soul, ‘tied and bound with the chain of sins,’ and to all human appearance irrecoverably lost? CHRIST must speak powerfully to the heart of such an one; who thereupon comes forth from the darkness of his former corrupt life, is endued with new powers, and asks but external loosing by the hands of CHRIST’s servants, in order that he may go perfectly free.—The reader is invited to refer to what has been already offered on the subject of the three cases of raising the dead, recorded in the Gospels, in the notes on St. Matthew ix. 25.—Gregory the Great observes: ‘The maiden is restored to life in the house; the young man outside the gate; Lazarus, in his grave. She that lies dead in the house, is the sinner lying in sin: he that is carried out by the gate, is the openly and notoriously wicked: and one there is who lies dead in his grave, weighed down by habits of Sin. But the Divine Grace has regard even unto such, and enlightens them.’ . . . ‘We do not,’ says Augustine, (after insisting, as all the ancient writers do, on the allegorical character of the foregoing miracle,)—‘We do not, because we trace an allegorical or mystical mean-

ing in facts, forfeit our belief in them as literal occurrences.' God forbid!

Of Lazarus himself, it is impossible to think without feelings of deepest awe, wonder, and curiosity. Here was one who *for four days* had been gathered to the world of Spirits; and was afterwards recalled to the world of sense. Was he perhaps engaged in converse with some departed soul, when the 'loud Voice' of the Incarnate JEHOVAH summoned him back to earth,—leaving the other amazed and confounded at the all but unparalleled strangeness of his withdrawal? There had been three such cases in three years; but not one so strange as this! The traditional account of the subsequent duration of his earthly life, (thirty years,) and of his demeanour, (how that he never smiled again,) cannot be entitled to serious attention. In the words of the poet,—

'The rest remaineth unreveal'd.

He told it not; or something seal'd
The lips of the Evangelist.'

Then many of the Jews which came to 45
Mary, and had seen the things which JESUS
did, believed on Him.

Whereby that came to pass which our SAVIOUR
had foretold, namely, that this sickness was 'not
unto death, but for the Glory of God^a.' The

^a See above, ver. 4.

reader is requested to read the last note on chapter x.

- 46 But some of them went their ways to the Pharisees, and told them what things JESUS had done.

Doubtless with an evil intent: and thus, (as was pointed out at some length above, in the note on ver. 36,) our LORD's words and actions were for ever revealing what was in the hearts of men; and throwing them into two opposite classes. So truly, of some, had it been foreseen and foretold by our SAVIOUR that 'if they heard not Moses and the prophets, neither would they be persuaded *though one rose from the dead*!'^{*} The grand exhibition of the truth of that saying was indeed future; being reserved for our LORD's Resurrection on the third day; yet was the present even a more palpable sign of the Godhead of Him who wrought. What is strange, here was one raised from Death, bearing the very name of the individual mentioned in the parable,—as if purposely to remind them of our SAVIOUR's former teaching, and to render their unbelief without excuse.

If it should appear strange to any, (as indeed at first sight it may well appear somewhat strange,) that persons who were capable of coming on so pious an errand as the consolation of the bereaved sisters, should have been also capable of the malig-

^{*} St. Luke xvi. 31.

nity here ascribed to certain of their body,—the real character of the act described in verses 19 and 31*, requires to be further explained. The same wretched formalism which had corrupted the sacred Oracles, and reduced the spirit of the Divine Law to the lifelessness of its letter,—is found to have obtruded itself also into the house of mourning; reducing sorrow to a ceremony of thirty days' duration, during which, every observance was a matter of routine, to be performed by rule and number. It is obvious that, dwelling among a people where the very chamber of Death was not exempt from intrusions of this sort, it may easily have come to pass that the sisters of Bethany were followed to the grave of their brother by some 'mourners' little disposed to rejoice in the presence of their great Benefactor.

Then gathered the chief priests and the 47 Pharisees a council, and said, What do we? for this Man doeth many miracles.

Rather 'What must we do?' or, 'What are we to do?' (as in chap. vi. 28 :) the meaning of which words will be found more fully explained below, in the note on verse 49. Thus the Court of Sanhedrin,—(for take notice that the word here translated 'Council' is the Greek word which the Jews pronounced *Sanhedrin*,)—this Court admit the

* And alluded to in ver. 45.

truth of the Miracles; but for political reasons, are apprehensive of their results. As it follows:

- 48 If we let Him thus alone, all *men* will believe on Him: and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation.

They apprehended the jealousy of the Roman Emperor, whom they knew would be incensed if tidings should reach the imperial City that One claiming to be the MESSIAH, (and therefore a *King*,) was drawing away large bodies of the people after Him. A true specimen, this, of the worthless reasoning of the wicked! We know that the very reverse of what they anticipated would have taken place. Jerusalem would, on the contrary, have been standing to this day!

In the meantime, the very thing they desired to guard against, actually occurred. This miracle procured for our SAVIOUR many Disciples[†]; while the catastrophe which they apprehended, they brought about, though in a different manner from what they anticipated, by the sinful measures they were adopting in order to prevent it. . . . Those who 'seek first the Kingdom of God and His Righteousness' have all other things added unto them[‡]. Those on the contrary, who seek not God, not only lose Him, but they lose the World besides.

- 49 And one of them, *named* Caiaphas, being

[†] See St. John xii. 10, 11, 17 to 19.

[‡] St. Matth. vi. 33.

the High-priest that same year, said unto them, Ye know nothing at all :

An expression, as it seems, of displeasure and impatience with the Council. He had heard the rest deliver their sentiments, and now comes forward to offer his own.—‘What are we to do?’ the others had said: implying thereby, plainly enough, that they were at a loss how to act, in consequence of their conviction of our Blessed LORD’s innocence. If the barest pretext for charging Him with any crime had occurred to them, they would have known full well what to do. His innocence it was which created all their difficulty. Caiaphas therefore puts down their scruples, and delivers his own opinion, which he declares roundly is based altogether on his view of political expediency. ‘Ye know nothing at all,’ (he begins,)—

nor consider that it is expedient for us, 50 that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not.

‘One MAN.’ The expression, which is marked in the original, did not escape the ancients. ‘It was as *Man* that CHRIST died for the people,’ observes Origen; ‘in so far as He is the image of the invisible God, He is incapable of Death.’ The word seems used as it were contemptuously, as in ver. 47; also in chap. v. 12.

Little can the speaker have suspected the Divine fulness of meaning which his angry and murder-

ous words contained ! On this subject, see below, the note on ver. 52. Very well worthy of our attention is the Evangelist's comment, which follows ; and the reason which he *twice* assigns for the prophetic character which belonged to the words of Caiaphas,—namely, that he was the High Priest of God's chosen people. An important inference from this statement will be offered presently*. For the moment, it shall suffice to call attention to the peculiar phrase employed by the Evangelist ; the precise force of which has never been explained. He says that Caiaphas was ' High-priest *that year*.' The office was indeed no longer held for life, according to the Divine appointment ; but had been lately conferred on many individuals in succession ; and it had been held for only one year, by some. Caiaphas, on the other hand, *seems* to have been High-priest for several years. The Evangelist's allusion is perhaps to some circumstance in the history of the priestly office about this period, which is nowhere expressly recorded.

This prophecy, which the Evangelist proceeds to explain, is so far characteristic of the man, as to be referred to in a subsequent chapter, as the most fitting circumstance whereby to identify him. Consider St. John xviii. 14.

- 31 And this spake he not of himself : but
being High-priest that year, he prophesied
52 that Jesus should die for that nation ; and

* See the end of the note on ver. 52.



not for that nation only, but that also He should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad.

A divine interpretation truly of that evil man's unsuspected prophecy ! ' The meaning of Caiaphas was insincere, mean, and timid : the meaning of the HOLY GHOST in his words was awful, mysterious, and divine'. All that Caiaphas *intended* to say clearly amounted to this,—that our SAVIOUR's destruction must any how be effected, and *that* speedily. His argument was, that the Death of One would thus be productive of general good,—by diverting from the nation the wrath of their Roman masters.

But his speech was overruled by a higher Power, and the words which fell from his lips proved susceptible of a double meaning : the HOLY GHOST deigning to employ even this sinful organ, (as He had already spoken by the mouth of Balaam,) to convey nothing less than a wondrous prophecy concerning the propitiatory nature of the approaching sacrifice of CHRIST's Death, and its marvellous result to 'the Israel of God' scattered throughout the world ; not only, (that is,) to the Jewish nation, but to the Gentiles as well^a. A far-sighted prophecy, truly ! extending infinitely beyond the anticipations, as yet, of any even of

^γ Williams.

^z Gal. vi. 16.

^a Compare 1 St. John ii. 2. Consider also the Divine comment on the place, supplied by Ephes. ii. 13 to 22.

the Apostles themselves. Our SAVIOUR alone has hitherto mentioned 'other sheep' 'not of this fold' which must yet be brought, and made 'one flock under one Shepherd^b.' The blessed result of His Cross and Passion, thus darkly hinted at, St. John describes in language formed upon Deut. xxx. 3. It will be found also to resemble Isaiah lvi. 8^c.

Irenæus, (the disciple of Polycarp, who was the disciple of St. John), records it as a saying of 'one of the elders,' that 'by the extension of His Divine Hands,' our crucified LORD 'gathered to One God the two people scattered to the ends of the earth.' This thought, which is full of pious beauty, found great favour with the ancient Church. It recurs perpetually in the primitive fathers.

The reason why the HOLY GHOST saw fit to prophesy by the mouth of Caiaphas, deserves to be noticed. It was because that individual happened to fill the place of High-priest. But he was an unauthorized intruder into his sacred office; having no other title to it than the will of the Roman Procurator, and the power of the Roman legions. Let us not therefore overlook the intimation thus conveyed that the unworthiness of *the individual* does not affect the sanctity of *his office*. This remains unimpaired. A solemn thought both for clergy and people; rulers and subjects! Chrysostom draws a double inference: 'see the

^b St. John x. 16.

^c See also Ps. cxlvii. 2: Jer. xxxii. 37: Ezek. xxxiv. 13.

great virtue of the HOLY SPIRIT,' (he says,) 'in drawing forth a prophecy from a wicked man. And see too the virtue of the pontifical office; which made him, though an unworthy High-priest, unconsciously prophesy. Divine grace used only his mouth : it touched not his corrupt heart.'

Then from that day forth they took counsel together for to put Him to death.

'Many indeed had been the designs against His life : but from this time the purpose was formal, deliberate, and determined ; under the usual plea by which Martyrs and Kings are slain,—that of public expediency^d.'

JESUS therefore walked no more openly ⁵⁴ among the Jews : but went thence unto a country near to the wilderness, into a city called Ephraim, and there continued with His Disciples.

The city thus mentioned is thought to have been situate between Jericho and Bethel. Thither our SAVIOUR now retires, and passes the season preparatory to His Crucifixion, in mysterious privacy with His disciples. But first, 'He puts forth this most astonishing of all miracles to speak aloud of itself to Jerusalem. His goodness had contended with their malice. They would have stoned Him

^d Williams.

for declaring Himself God : He retires from them, and in retiring leaves this miracle to tell them who He is ; and leaves them to consider it awhile,—then coming Himself to die for them. . . . Lazarus had thus come from the grave to warn his brethren. Living at Bethany, in the very neighbourhood of Jerusalem, he continued after he had been raised from the dead to be a living witness for a time unto those who would not ‘hear Moses and the prophets.’ So much was this the case, that at the concourse of the festival, (described in the next chapter,) many went from Jerusalem to Bethany, ‘not for Jesus’ sake only, but that they might see Lazarus also, whom He had raised from the dead*.’

Why does St. John mention the name of the present place of our LORD’s retreat? . . . It follows :

55 And the Jews’ Passover was nigh at hand :

The last year of our Blessed LORD’s ministry had now very nearly come to a close. In the viith chapter of the present Gospel, we were reminded of the events of October ; in the xth chapter, a Festival kept in December obtained notice†. The Passover season, (belonging to March or April,) is now approaching. To the month of January or of February therefore, the raising of

* Williams, quoting St. John xii. 9.

† St. John x. 22.

azarus, which has hitherto occupied our attention, may be loosely referred; and the intervening weeks, according to the statement in verse 54, will have been spent at Ephraim. If the suggestion hazarded in the note on verse 8 be correct, the period of sojourn at Ephraim will have commenced some weeks earlier.

and many went out of the country up to Jerusalem before the Passover, to purify themselves.

For cleanness, according to the Law of Moses, was required of all persons^a who would keep the Feast of the Passover at the time appointed^b. The 'many,' therefore, who are here spoken of, were such as had contracted some legal defilement, from which they could not be purified without the performance of certain rites in the Temple^c.

A thoughtful writer observes,—'They who went up to purify themselves in order to keep the Feast, were nevertheless desirous to embrue their hands in innocent blood! It was to this, therefore, that the HOLY SPIRIT had particularly called their attention throughout the Prophets: pointing out this 'spot in their Feasts' by the finger of reproof, and one also of prophetic warning. It was to this circumstance also that our LORD had always directed His teaching of the Pharisees, as knowing what

^a Numb. ix. 6 to 13: 2 Chron. xxx. 17 to 19.

^b Exod. xii. 3 to 6.

^c Lonsdale and Hale,

was in the heart of man ; and foreseeing this consummation of hypocrisy to which they were tending. And even now, had they been at all desirous to 'purify themselves' in reality, by that cleansing of the heart by repentance which the Law signified, as well as by the external rites which it ordained, they would have been preserved from that great wickedness ; they would have received the CHRIST ; they would have laid aside their own corrupt leaven, and kept the Feast 'in sincerity and truth^k.'

'This purification required by the Law,' (continues the same pious writer,) 'was like that call to Repentance which preceded the coming in of the Kingdom ; for without Repentance the eyes of flesh could not 'see the salvation of God^l.' It is like the Lent which precedes Easter, in order to give us eyes to discern CHRIST crucified. Nay, it is so with the Gospel itself ; for we must purify ourselves lest we should not behold CHRIST therein, even though He sitteth in His own Temple.'

56 Then sought they for JESUS, and spake among themselves, as they stood in the Temple, What think ye, that He will not come to the Feast ?

57 Now both the chief Priests and the Pharisees had given a commandment, that, if any man knew where He were, he should shew it, that they might take Him.

^k Williams, quoting 1 Cor. v. 8.

^l Is. lii. 10.

‘ Well therefore did our LORD say unto them by His own Evangelical Prophet, when He began more distinctly to prefigure to them the coming in of this dispensation,—‘ Your new moons and your appointed feasts My soul hateth : they are a trouble unto Me ; I am weary to bear them.’ ‘ Wash you, make you clean.’ ‘ *Your hands are full of blood^m.*’ . . . More, indeed, than they] meant did they say in the Temple when they spoke of His coming to the Feast, and apprehended that they should not find Him thereⁿ !’

It is somewhat affecting to read such an account as the following, of the aspect which Bethany now presents. Let us remember that we are hearing about the frequent and favourite resort of our adorable REDEEMER : let us call to mind how often He withdrew from the murderous capital to sanctify that quiet abode of loving hearts,—treading with ‘ beautiful feet^o’ the eastern slope of the Mount of Olives, in quest of a friendly roof beneath which He might lay His weary head^p. This, and His miracles of Love, and His words of Eternal Truth,—all the unspeakable blessedness and beauty which must have attended His ‘ going out and coming in^q,’—must be considered ; after which, it seems impossible to read the following words of an American traveller^r without painful

^m Isaiah i. 14, 16, 15.

ⁿ Williams.

^o Isaiah lii. 7.

^p St. Matth. viii. 20.

^q See the note on St. John x. 9.

^r Dr. Robinson.

emotion:—‘Bethany is a poor village of twenty families; its inhabitants are appar without thrift or industry. In the walls of of the houses there are marks of antiquity,—hewn stones, some of them bevelled; but have all obviously belonged to more ancien floes, and been employed again and aga the construction of successive dwellings, or buildings. The monks, as a matter of c shew the house of Mary and Martha, that off the Leper, and the sepulchre of Lazarus. latter is a deep vault, like a cellar, excav the limestone rock in the middle of the vi to which there is a descent by twenty-six It is hardly necessary to remark, that there the slightest probability of its ever having the tomb of Lazarus. The form is not that ancient sepulchres; nor does its position a with the narrative of the New Testament, implies that the tomb was not in the town.’

But this writer’s concluding statement is c value. ‘The Arab name of the village,’ (he ‘is *el-Aziriyeh*, from *el-Azir*, the Arabic fo ‘Lazarus.’ The name Bethany is unknown a the native inhabitants.’—Thus the celebrity miracle we have been considering proves to been so great, that, at the end of eighteen hu years, the very stones have learnt to cry out the name of ‘Lazarus’ will cleave to the k to the end of Time!



